

## MONGOLIA, PANDAS & MONKS, (ERP)

Luang Prabang to Ulaanbaatar 69 days, departing 01 Apr 2020



## CONTENTS

- [Optional Activities](#)
- [Insurance](#)
- [Out of Office Hours Contact](#)
- [Luggage & Kit List](#)
- [Personal Medical Kit](#)
- [Passports](#)
- [Pre And Post Trip](#)
- [Accommodation And Connecting Flights](#)
- [Continuing Your Trip](#)
- [Contingency Emergency Fund](#)
- [Responsible Tourism](#)
- [Electrical](#)
- [A Few Rules](#)
- [Issues On The Trip](#)
- [Our Community](#)
- [Feedback](#)
- [Countries Visited](#)
- [Daily Itinerary](#)
- [Visa Information](#)
- [Important Notes](#)
- [Overland Lifestyle And Trip Suitability](#)
- [Tipping](#)
- [Who Travels With Dragoman?](#)
- [Accommodation On Tour](#)
- [The Kitty](#)
- [Group Size](#)
- [Our Crew And Guides](#)
- [Meals And Group Participation](#)
- [Dietary Requirements](#)

## TRIP OVERVIEW

**Trip Style:** Overlanding

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**Route:** Luang Prabang to Ulaanbaatar



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**Duration:** 69 days

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**Transport:** Overland expedition vehicle, Private bus, Taxi, Ferry, Overnight boat, Metro

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 15% 
  85%

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**Accom:** Hotels, Hostels, Guesthouses, Wild Camps, Yurts

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### Physical Challenge:

EASY  HARD

Depending on the trip, activities may include treks of 3-4 hours at altitude or across hilly terrain, multi-day treks at sea level, horseback riding, canoeing and other adventurous activities.

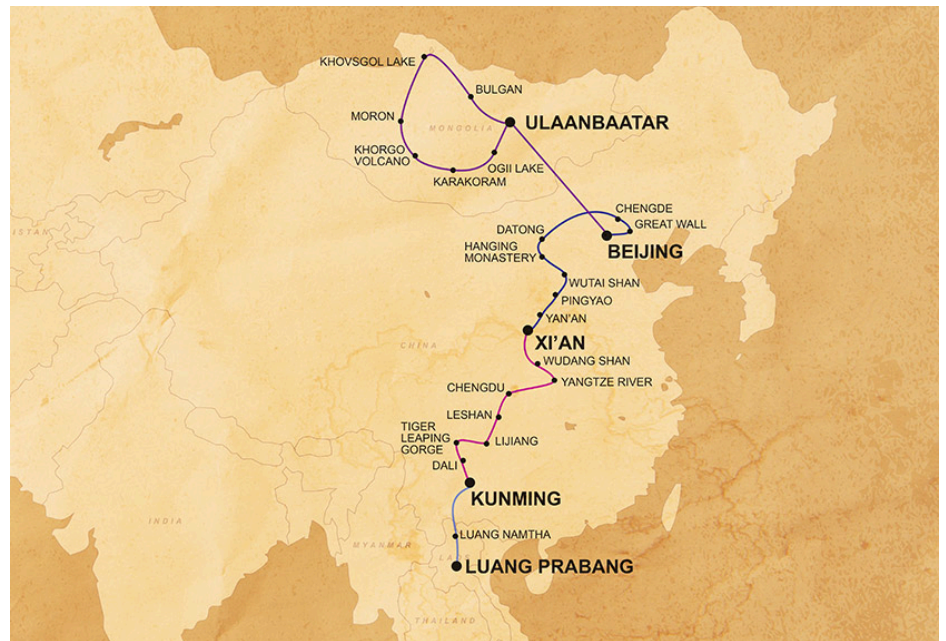
### Lifestyle Challenge:

EASY  HARD

This is a trip for people with a real sense of adventure.

[Itineraries](#)  
[British Foreign Office Travel Advice and Warnings](#)  
[Health](#)  
[Safety & Security](#)  
[Included Activities](#)

## ROUTE MAP



## COUNTRIES VISITED

### China



### ENDLESS HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE OVERLAND TRAVELLER

As one of the world's largest countries and the most populous, there is so much to discover and explore in China.

Understanding the history of China is key to understanding modern China. The people are

### Laos



### FOR A SMALL COUNTRY, LAOS IS ONE OF THE MOST DIVERSE PLACES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA.

Laos is graced with many serene and relaxed towns, a product of the country's Buddhist traditions of peace and respect. The wonderful city of Luang Prabang is no exception, with its vibrant market, ornate monasteries and

proud of its past, and keen to share its heritage with the world. In a country that defies superlatives, the words 'vast', 'astonishing' and 'variation' don't really seem to cover it - China really does have it all!

### STUNNING NATURAL SCENERY

From the phenomenal karst rock formations and mountains of the south, the vast deserts of the west, the high plateau and towering mountains of Tibet, and the incredible rolling landscapes of the east, China contains some of the most stunning and varied scenery to be found in all of Asia. The entire country is teeming with beautifully-chaotic modern cities juxtaposed with thousands of years of fascinating history and heritage. Throughout the country, China's unique culture, music, architecture, history, cuisine and society shines through, and we immerse ourselves in it through every journey through it.

Beijing is the hub of political and international focus - it is truly a magnificent modern city merged with the ancient heritage and architecture of the past, such as its celebrated sites of the Forbidden Palace and the Summer Temple.

### ANCIENT CHINA & HOLY TEMPLES

China has endless highlights such as the world-famous Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an, the incredible scenery of the Tian Shan mountains near Kashgar, the Buddhist caves of Dunhuang, Dazu and Datong, the incredible holy mountain temples of Wudang Shan, Wutai Shan, Kongtong and Emei Shan, the stunning traditional towns of Pingyao, Lijiang and Dali, and of course the phenomenal Great Wall of China, one of the world's great sights!

## Mongolia



the nearby Kuang Si waterfalls, it's a place most visitors spend at least a few days.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF LAOS

Other highlights include the peaceful northern village of Luang Namtha, the base for some **incredible treks** and optional adventure activities in the forests and rivers of Nam Ha National Park. Vang Vieng, in the heart of the country, is another incredible town and known for its outdoor activities such as trekking, cycling and rock climbing!

Like the landscapes, the food is also beautiful. The typical Laotian dish of Laap is rich in marinated meat and aromatic herbs. It is a perfect treat after a day of exploring. With a distinct taste, the dish is best enjoyed with sticky rice and lashings of fish sauce.

Laos is a country that offers a friendly welcome, and you're sure to have a wonderful time whilst enjoying the landscapes and culture of this gem of South East Asia.

## THE OVERLANDER'S LAST FRONTIER

Mongolia is one of the world's last frontiers of overland travel! The birthplace of the warlord Genghis Khan, it is a true wilderness of nomadic people and stunning scenery, everything from mountains to desolate plains to pine forests to deserts.

Our journey through this wild country will take us through some of the remotest lands on Earth. We will travel through the beautiful lands of the nomadic Mongolians, whether [wild camping](#) or staying in the traditional gers (yurts) with our hosts.

## THROAT SINGING, TEMPLES & WILD CAMPING

Mongolia has an enchanting and unique culture, and we will embrace every aspect of it as we explore this vast wilderness. From the phenomenal traditional 'throat-singing', to the country's interesting cuisine (featuring the acquired taste of fermented horse milk!), to the Buddhist temples, to the traditions of the etiquette of a ger visit, the culture is fascinating and a world away from Western life.

The essence of this route is freedom and flexibility, and nowhere are these philosophies more vital than in Mongolia. One major highlight of Mongolia is this freedom, the fact that our itineraries are very flexible here, and the country is a wild camping paradise wherever we go!

[Back to top ^](#)

## DAILY ITINERARY

### Day 1: Luang Prabang ( Wed 01 Apr )

**Border Information:** If joining in Luang Prabang, you will most likely enter Laos at Luang Prabang International Airport (IATA code: LPQ).

Today will be a free day to explore the beautiful city of Luang Prabang until the evening. There will be a group meeting today at 6:00pm - please look out for a note from your tour leader on arrival at the joining hotel with more information about this important meeting.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Luang Prabang before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Luang Prabang.

In Luang Prabang we will stay in a comfortable local hotel

Hotel for the night: Sunway Hotel



## Sunway Hotel

Souphanouvong Street  
Muenna Village  
Luang Prabang  
Laos  
+85671213062

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Enjoy the tranquility of beautiful colonial city Luang Prabang

Free

Visit the Royal Palace in Luang Prabang, a fascinating blend of Lao and French architecture

LAK 30000

Learn how to prepare some local Lao specialities at one of Luang Prabang's excellent cooking classes

USD 25

Explore the temple of Wat Xieng Thong, the oldest and one of the most beautiful temples in Luang Prabang

LAK 20000

Witness the sunrise from the panoramic viewpoint at the summit of Phou Si hill

LAK 20000

Visit the incredible site of Kuang Si and explore its beautiful waterfalls and pools

LAK 20000

Learn all about the traditional art and lifestyles of Laos's many diverse ethnic groups at the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre

LAK 25000

### About Luang Prabang:

The enchanting city of Luang Prabang is anchored at the junction of the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers in northern Laos. Home to a spellbinding array of gilded temples, art deco shop fronts and weathered French colonial buildings, it is a fascinating and beautiful city to wander around. For all its magnificent architecture, it actually feels more like an easy-going provincial town - saffron-robed monks amble silently through the streets collecting offerings from the city's residents in the early morning, and when the evening comes old men lounge in chairs outside their homes while children play out in the streets.

There's plenty to explore here, from the Royal Palace and the town's many temples to the sacred caves of Pak Ou a short distance outside the city. You can also make the steep climb up Mount Phousi - the spiritual and geographical heart of the city, and a great spot to watch the sunset over the Mekong.



## Day 2 to 4: Luang Namtha ( Thu 02 Apr to Sat 04 Apr )

This morning we drive through the stunning countryside of northern Laos to the small town of Luang Namtha.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-8 hours (please note that all drive times given here are approximate estimates only and are given with the best intentions - however please be aware that the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

In Luang Namtha we will have two free days to enjoy the many optional activities available in and around Luang Namtha and the nearby Nam Ha National Park. Popular activities here include hiking and trekking in the National Park.

In Luang Namtha we will stay in a local guesthouse.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Cross the border into Laos and relax in peaceful Luang Nam Tha	USD 35
Optional rafting, kayaking and trekking in Nam Ha National Park	USD 25
Get into the heart of the Nam Ha national park by trekking deep into the forests and mountains of the area (1 or 2 day treks available)	USD 20
Take a relaxing river boat cruise down the Nam Ha or Nam Tha River to explore the beautiful national park from the water	USD 20
Learn how to prepare several unique northern Lao dishes at a cooking class in Luang Namtha	USD 30

### About Luang Namtha:

Luang Namtha is a laid-back town on the banks of the Nam Tha river in northern Laos. It's the most ethnically diverse area in the whole of the country, home to more than 35 minority groups, including the Lanten, Hmong, Khmu and Tai Dam.

The nearby Nam Ha Protected Area is a conservation area covering over 200,000 square kilometres - it's a beautiful, remote, mountainous area, home to a wide array of wildlife including the black-cheeked crested gibbon, tigers and clouded leopards, as well as over 300 species of birds. Whilst we are staying in Luang Namtha it is possible to arrange trekking, mountain-biking, kayaking and rafting trips that will take you right in to the heart of this protected region.



## Day 5: Mohan ( Sun 05 Apr )

**Border Information:** Exit Laos at Boten, enter China at Mengla.

This morning we will cross the border into China and begin our journey through the southern Chinese region of Xishuangbanna. We spend the next few days overlanding through this beautiful area, stopping off at towns, villages and local markets along the way.

Tonight we will stay in the border town of Mengla while your crew finalise the paperwork to enter our truck into China.

Estimated Drive Time - 1-2 hours.

## Day 6: Xishuangbanna ( Mon 06 Apr )

Today will be a full day's drive through Yunnan province towards Kunming, most likely reaching the town of Mojiang or Yuxi en route.

Tonight we will stay in a local hotel en route.

Estimated Drive Time - 8-9 hours.

### About Xishuangbanna:

Xishuangbanna, an area located in China's deep south in the province of Yunnan, is a remote region characterised by its lush, tropical landscapes, virgin rainforest, plantations and paddy fields. The area takes its name from the Chinese approximation of the original Thai "Sip Sawng Pann" which means "12 rice growing districts".

Passing through the small villages and tropical forests you'll realise just how far removed from the rest of provincial China you are - Xishuangbanna has a real laid-back, South East Asian feel, more akin to its close neighbours Laos and Myanmar. The area is also home to a large number of indigenous minority groups like the Dai people, with their distinctive colourful dress and customs.

## Day 7: Shilin Stone Forest ( Tue 07 Apr )

This morning we will complete our drive to the incredible Shilin Stone Forest. We will have a free afternoon exploring the stunning and bizarre rock formations of the Stone Forest.

We will stay in a local hotel tonight near to the Shilin Stone Forest.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

### Activity

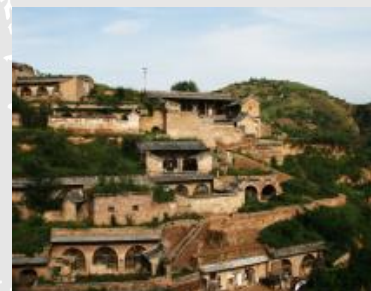
Explore the maze of limestone pinnacles in the Stone Forest

### Approximate Cost

Included in Kitty

### About Shilin Stone Forest:

The Shilin "Stone Forest" is an intriguing maze of towering grey karst limestone pillars, the tallest of which is 30 metres high. The tall rocks are in the shape of stalagmites, with many looking like petrified trees



and creating the illusion of a forest made of stone. The pinnacles and peaks were created from centuries of erosion by the wind and rain, and have formed into bizarre and fanciful shapes. Walking through the forest is like strolling through a surreal and otherworldly labyrinth, and the rock formations here are nothing short of magical!

## Day 8: Kunming ( Wed 08 Apr )

Today we will drive to Kunming, the vibrant, modern capital of Yunnan province. We will have a free day to explore the city's sights.

In Kunming we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 2-3 hours.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight stay in Yunnan's laid back capital, Kunming	CNY 6
Visit the Yunnan University Wu Mayao Museum of Anthropology in Kunming, and learn all about the history of the province	Free
Learn all about the area's minorities at the Yunnan Provincial Museum, and visit the nearby markets	Free

### About Kunming:

Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, is known in China as "the city of eternal spring" due to its temperate climate. It's a thoroughly modern city, and home to a population of about 6 million people - but despite its size it's actually pretty laid-back and has some beautiful parks to while away an afternoon. The Yuantong temple is definitely worth a visit - at over 1,000 years old it is the largest Buddhist temple complex in Kunming.

## Day 9: Kunming ( Thu 09 Apr )

**Border Information:** if joining in Kunming, you will most likely enter China at Kunming Changshui International Airport (IATA code: KMG).

There will be a group meeting today at 6:00pm - please look out for a note from your tour leader at the hotel reception with more information about this important meeting.

The rest of the day will be free to explore the city of Kunming, its museums and its parks.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Kunming before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Kunming.



In Kunming we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Hotel for the night: Hong He Hotel

**Hong He (Red River) Hotel**

204 Chuncheng Road

Guandu District

Kunming, 650041

Yunnan Province

China

Tel - +86 871 6626 5666

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Overnight stay in Yunnan's laid back capital, Kunming	CNY 6
Visit the Yunnan University Wu Mayao Museum of Anthropology in Kunming, and learn all about the history of the province	Free
Learn all about the area's minorities at the Yunnan Provincial Museum, and visit the nearby markets	Free

**Day 10 to 11: Dali ( Fri 10 Apr to Sat 11 Apr )**

Today our journey begins with a morning drive to the beautiful Naxi town of Dali, where we will stay for 2 nights.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours (please note that all drive times given here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

On the following day we will have a free day to fully explore the area and for optional activities such as some short treks in the nearby Cangshan mountains or hiring bicycles to ride around the Dali lake.

In Dali we stay in a friendly hostel or guesthouse with good facilities.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Time for sightseeing in the lakeside town of Dali, home to the minority Bai people	CNY 40
Learn how to make dumplings and traditional Yunnanese cuisine at one of Dali's fantastic cooking classes	CNY 150

Discover the ornate 9th-century Three Pagodas of Chongsheng, some of the tallest pagodas in China's history and the symbol of Dali CNY 120

Head out by bicycle to explore the region in depth and visit various Bai villages and Qing Dynasty bridges en route CNY 50

Experience the incredible ancient art of cormorant fishing with the fishermen of Xizhou on Lake Erhai CNY 100

### About Dali:

Everybody loves Dali - aside from the beautiful setting and its stunning mountain backdrop, the town is home to the minority Bai people which makes for some colourful history and culture, not to mention its traveller-friendly western-style beer gardens and restaurants. With its temperate climate, ancient pagodas, and beautiful natural setting, it's the perfect place for some rest and relaxation - be it cormorant fishing on Lake Erhai, cycling around the scenic landscapes, or enjoying a traditional Chinese massage.

## Day 12 to 14: Lijiang, Tiger Leaping Gorge ( Sun 12

Apr to Tue 14 Apr )

Today we drive further north through Yunnan province to the beautiful 'Old-China'-style town of Lijiang, the base for visiting the world-famous Tiger Leaping Gorge.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-5 hours.

On the following 2 days we will have free time to explore the town of Lijiang and its surroundings. One very popular excursion here is to go on a 2 day/1 night trek along the high trail above the Tiger Leaping Gorge - this is by far the best way to see the gorge from some truly incredible vantage points, and we will have the opportunity to take this trek during our time here (staying in a local guesthouse on the trail on the first night and returning to Lijiang for the second). For those that don't want to do the full trek, your crew will also be able to arrange a trip to the low sections of the gorge, where there is a flat walkway to various viewpoints.

In Lijiang we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the beautiful natural scenery and traditional buildings in the Black Dragon Pool Park CNY 80

Head out for a day of trekking around the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, taking in CNY 80

some of the most incredible scenery in China on a clear day

Explore the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain area by cable car CNY 280

See the incredible 'Impressions Lijiang' cultural show, demonstrating the traditions and lifestyles of the Naxi, Yi and Bai peoples of the area CNY 270

Freely explore the area by bicycle and discover the Naxi villages surrounding Lijiang, such as the beautiful village of Baisha CNY 20

Head out for a 2-day self-guided trek along the high ridge of the sensational Tiger Leaping Gorge CNY 200

Go on a shorter trek along the flat base of Tiger Leaping Gorge to enjoy the scenery from below CNY 125

### **About Lijiang:**

Nestled in a beautiful valley dominated by the ice-capped massif of Yulong Xue Shan (Jade Dragon Snow Mountain), Lijiang is a small town in north-west Yunnan province and capital of the Naxi Kingdom. The old town is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and one of the most atmospheric places in all of China - a maze of cobbled streets threads in and out of a network of ancient waterways supplied by the nearby mountain streams, all delicately lit by coloured lanterns.

Explore the Mu Palace, enjoy a traditional Naxi music culture show, or wander around the old town. The Naxi are one of China's many minority groups, descended from a race of Tibetan nomads who settled in the region some time before the start of the 10th Century CE.

Until very recently, Naxi society was organised around matriarchal lines - and in many ways the women still seem to be the ones running the show, especially in and around old Lijiang. Traditionally the Naxi have practiced a shamanistic religion known as Dongba, a blend Animism, Taoism and old Tibetan traditions, and pantheistic murals still decorate many of the temples in and around the town.

### **About Tiger Leaping Gorge:**

About 100kms north of Lijiang, the upper reaches of the Yangtze River cut spectacularly through the famous Tiger Leaping Gorge. Set at 2,500 metres altitude, the 16km long gorge is flanked on its southern side by a range of ash grey mountain peaks that rise over 3km above the river's rapids. The gorge was so-named due to an ancient myth in which tiger jumped across the gorge to escape a hunter.

It is usually possible to organise a 2-day trek along the top of the gorge, staying overnight in one of the local guesthouses - a beautiful

trek that is achievable by most active people and incredibly scenic and peaceful place. A short day trek along the base of the gorge is a great alternative!

### **Day 15: Panzhihua ( Wed 15 Apr )**

Today we have a long drive north through stunning mountain scenery towards China's Sichuan province.

Tonight we will stay in a comfortable local hotel en route.

Estimated Drive Time - 7-9 hours.

### **Day 16 to 17: Emei Shan ( Thu 16 Apr to Fri 17 Apr )**

Today we will continue our drive to the small town of Emei Shan.

Estimated Drive Time - 8-10 hours.

On the following day we will have a full day to explore Emei Shan Mountain, one of the holiest sites in Chinese Buddhism and the site of hundreds of temples and an incredible golden statue of the deity known as Samantabhadra. It is possible to walk all the way up the stairs from the base of the mountain, joining the many pilgrims in their journey to the temple complex at the mountain summit, or take the cable car up instead!

In Emei Shan we will stay in a local guesthouse.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Day trek up the lush mountain of Emei Shan, one of the most important pilgrimage treks in China	Included in Kitty
Take a cable car ride to the top of Emei Shan	CNY 120

#### **About Emei Shan:**

South of Chengdu in Sichuan province lies Emei Shan, one of the Four Sacred Mountains of Chinese Buddhism. At just over 3,000m high, this mountain has been a centre of pilgrimage for Buddhists for over 1,800 years - in Buddhism it is believed to be the home of the Bodhisattva of practice and meditation, Samantabhadra.

The lower slopes of the mountain have some great hiking trails through dense lush green vegetation. The most common trek is to follow the route of the pilgrims to the phenomenal Buddhist temples on the mountain's summit - a variety of glittering golden statues and buildings await you on the top, as does an incredible view over the surrounding mountains.

### **Day 18 to 19: Chengdu, Leshan ( Sat 18 Apr to Sun**

## 19 Apr )

Today we continue our journey north to the town of Leshan to visit to the Leshan Grand Buddha - at 71m tall, this statue is the largest Buddha rock carving in the world!

After our visit we will continue to the incredible city of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, where we will stay for 2 nights. On arrival we will have a free afternoon to explore the city's parks, streets, and museums, and visit the fascinating and incredibly photogenic Jinli Old Town.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-5 hours.

On the following day we will have an included visit to the fantastic Chengdu Panda Breeding Centre. We'll then return to Chengdu for another free afternoon to further explore the city.

In Chengdu we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit to the Giant Panda breeding centre in Chengdu	Included in Kitty
Explore the Jinsha Archeological Site, the capital of the Bronze Age Shu Kingdom who were one of the most ancient civilisations to settle in the area	CNY 80
Freely explore the narrow streets of the atmospheric Jinli Ancient Street and visit the nearby Wuhouci Shrine	CNY 60
Explore the cobbled streets of historic Lijang	CNY 85
Explore the mountain complex of Qingcheng, one of the ancient cradles of Taoism in China	CNY 190
Visit the impressive Tang Dynasty Buddhist temple of Wenshu, containing more than 450 Buddha statues	CNY 5
Head out for an evening performance of a traditional Sichuanese Opera	CNY 220
See the colossal Dafo Great Buddha in Leshan, the world's largest rock-carved Buddha statue	Included in Kitty

## About Chengdu:

Chengdu has a surprisingly laid-back feel for a big city, and has a good variety of things to see and do. For wildlife lovers, an absolute must is a visit to the Giant Panda Breeding Centre. Sichuan province is home to the majority of the few pandas that are left in the wild, as the Yangtze Basin eco-region is an important habitat for the animals. Because their numbers are so depleted, it is virtually impossible to see a panda in the wild - and so this centre offers a convenient, responsible and educational way to get up close to these amazing animals.

Chengdu also has numerous historical and cultural sites to explore such as the Marquis of Wu's Temple, a number of famous Buddhist sanctuaries and Qingyanggong, the best-preserved memorial temple of Lao Zi, father of Taoism. The Jinli Old Street is a wonderful and atmospheric slice of 'old China' in the heart of the modern city.

If you're feeling brave, Chengdu is also a good place to sample Sichuan cooking - even by Asian standards, the Sichuanese heap a phenomenal amount of hot spices onto most dishes. Chengdu is also a great place to sample the unique art form of Sichuanese opera!

#### **About Leshan:**

The small town of Leshan, on the banks of the Min River, contains one of the most incredible sights from ancient China - the 71m-tall Dafo Great Buddha, built in the 8th Century CE during the Tang Dynasty.

The statue took over 90 years to build and incorporated ingenious water ducting canals to reduce weathering and water erosion. It's a truly impressive sight, peering out over the river through half-lidded eyes with its vast bulk towering over the small boats - it is still the largest stone-cut Buddha in the world and was by far the largest pre-modern statue in the world. You can get an incredible view from its base, and an even better one from a boat trip on the river opposite.

### **Day 20: Dazu ( Mon 20 Apr )**

From Chengdu we will continue to the small village of Dazu, where we visit the Bei Shan and Baoding Shan caves, famous for their brightly-coloured freizes and carvings.

In Dazu we will stay in a local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

#### **Activity**

#### **Approximate Cost**

Side trip to see the amazing sleeping Buddha in the Dazu Caves

CNY 135

#### **About Dazu:**

The rock carvings near the village of Dazu are some of the most beautifully-preserved and colourful Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian sculptures in China. The oldest caves here date back to 650 CE and the Tang Dynasty, although most of the carvings are from the late 9th Century CE (during the Five Dynasties period) or 12th Century CE (during the Song Dynasty). There are many rock-cut caves full of statues and shrines, but there are also many reliefs cut right into

the open rock face - these have some of the best preserved paintwork of any ancient sculptures in China.

The site was off-limits for many years, and was finally opened to visitors in 1980 - fortunately due to the remote location the caves escaped the destruction of religious art during Mao Tse Tung's Cultural Revolution.

## **Day 21: Chongqing ( Tue 21 Apr )**

Today we will drive on the Chongqing, where we will have time to explore the city and prepare for tomorrow's ferry cruise on the mighty Yangtze River!

We will most likely stay in a local hotel in Chongqing tonight, but on occasion our ferry may need to depart tonight, in which case we will have a spare day later in the trip that we can use at our discretion.

Estimated Drive Time - 2-3 hours.

### **About Chongqing:**

One of China's emerging 'mega-cities', Chongqing has a staggering population of over 30 million people, making it the most populous municipality in the country. The city is officially abbreviated to 'Yu', which is the old name for a nearby section of the Jialing River that feeds into the Yangtze. The city has a wealth of history and is the economic centre of the Yangtze Basin. Chongqing was the wartime capital of China during the Second World War between 1937 and 1945 (known as the Second Sino-Japanese War in China).

## **Day 22 to 24: Wanzhou, Three Gorges, Badong, Yichang ( Wed 22 Apr to Fri 24 Apr )**

Today we embark on our Yangtze River Cruise. We travel on a local ferry boat used by local people, a much more authentic and interesting way of travelling than on a tourist cruise. We stay in shared cabins (4 members of the group to each cabin) with private bathrooms and air conditioning where possible.

The journey itself usually takes 3 days/3 nights and heads through some areas of stunning scenery, especially near the Three Gorges - the Qutang, Wu and Xiling Gorges. The boats usually stop at the Fengdu (Ghost City), Shibaozai Tower, home to the Lanruo Dian (Orchid Temple) and at the three Lesser Gorges at various points on the trip. However due to local conditions, stops cannot always be guaranteed.

We will arrive in the city of Yichang and disembark our ferry to rejoin our truck and co-driver and have some free time to explore Yichang and the surrounding area.

We will most likely have an included visit to the incredible Three Gorges Dam, the largest hydroelectric dam in the world, on the last day.

In Yichang we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Cruise down the mighty Yangtze River for 3 nights on a local sleeper ferry	Included in Kitty
Stop off at the White Emperor City, a very scenic spot featured on the Chinese 10 Yuan banknote!	CNY 180
Stop off to take a boat ride through the stunning Three Mini Gorges	CNY 220
Stop off to visit the 1700-year-old Zhang Fei temple, famous for its exterior red-light decoration	Included in Kitty
The cruise visits the main sites of the Three Gorges & new Yangtze Dam	Included in Kitty

### About Three Gorges:

A boat trip along the Yangtze River offers a unique insight into the life and scenery along the river. The most popular section of the river to travel along is between Yichang and Chongqing - travelling between these two towns on a local river ferry, you will pass through the most stunning scenery of the Three Gorges: Qutang, Wu and Xiling. The boats usually also stop at the Fengdu (Ghost City), Shibaozai Tower and Lanruo Dian (Orchid-like Temple), and the three Lesser Gorges, although the exact itineraries vary depending on time of year and local conditions.

### About Yichang:

The town of Yichang is situated in a curve on the northern banks of the Yangtze River. An ancient city whose history can be traced back 4,000 years, today the town is best known as a gateway to the Three Gorges section of the Yangtze and as the home of the incredible Three Gorges Dam project, the world's largest hydroelectric dam producing nearly 100 TWh per year.

## Day 25: Xiang Fan ( Sat 25 Apr )

This morning we will have some free time in Yichang or visit the Three Gorges Dam if we did not have time yesterday. After lunch we will drive to the town of Xiang Fan, en route to Wudang Shan.

In Xiang Fan we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

## Day 26 to 27: Wudang Shan ( Sun 26 Apr to Mon 27 Apr )

Today we will continue our journey with a drive to the beautiful Wudang Shan Mountain Reserve, the birthplace of the martial art of Taichi and the location of the filming of 'Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon'. We will



also try to stop at the Purple Cloud Monastery en route if time allows.

Estimated Drive Time - 2-4 hours.

On the following day we will have a full day to explore the mountain's sights, temples and martial arts schools.

In Wudang Shan we will stay in a local hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Trek up the Tianzu Peak to visit the Taoist martial arts school and numerous temples on Wudang Shan

Included in Kitty

### About Wudang Shan:

Wudang Shan is one of the most important sites for followers of Chinese Taoism - it is a 1,600m mountain covered in atmospheric bamboo forests and liberally dotted with Taoist temples. The Taoist philosophy concentrates on the balance of nature and man's place within it, and not acting in a way that contrasts nature.

The temples of Wudang Shan are an incredible place to explore on foot, and is always buzzing with Taoist pilgrims. Wudang Shan is also famous for its martial arts - Kung Fu is widely practised here, and Wudang boxing was created here and subsequently developed into the modern Tai Chi.

## Day 28: Xi'an ( Tue 28 Apr )

Today we will drive to the amazing city of Xi'an, the ancient capital of Shaanxi province and the end of the 'Silk Road'! We will have a free afternoon on arrival to explore the city of Xi'an, its famous walls, bell and drum towers, pagodas and Muslim Quarter.

In Xi'an we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

### About Xi'an:

The imperial centre of China for 2,000 years, Xi'an is now a vibrant, modern city dotted with many interesting historical sites. Xi'an was the start of the famous ancient trading route of the Silk Road and the city is still surrounded by its original city walls which you can climb and walk or cycle along, a unique way to experience the city. For a different view, haul yourself to the top of the Bell or Drum Towers in the centre of the city. Home to many Hui people, an ethnic Muslim minority, the city also has a unique Islamic flavour, particularly in the streets and markets surrounding the Great Mosque, best explored by foot.

Thanks to Xi'an's long and colourful history, the city is full of beautiful temples, museums and interesting cultural and historic sites, the most famous of which are probably the ancient Terracotta Warriors. The collection of over 8,000 life-sized model warriors and 700 horses was discovered by farmers digging a well in 1974. Dating from the late 3rd Century BCE, they were built by Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China, to protect his tomb in the afterlife.

## Day 29: Xi'an ( Wed 29 Apr )

**Border Information:** if joining in Xi'an, you will most likely enter China at Xi'an Xianyang International Airport (IATA code: XIY).

Welcome to the amazing city of Xi'an, the ancient capital of Shaanxi province and the end of the 'Silk Road'!

There will be a group meeting today at 10:00am - please look out for a note from your tour leader at the hotel reception with more information about this important meeting.

This afternoon we head out of Xi'an on the truck to the site of the world-famous Terracotta Warriors, where we have an included visit and a guided tour.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Xi'an before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Xi'an.

In Xi'an we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Hotel for the night: Skytel Hotel

**Skytel Hotel Xi'an**

No. 32 South Avenue (Nan Dajie)

Beilin District

Xi'an

Shaanxi Province

China

Tel - +86 29 8763 2222

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the world-famous site of the Terracotta Warriors, an army of 8000 life-size figures built to protect the Emperor Qin Shi Huang in the afterlife

Included in Kitty

## Day 30: Xi'an ( Thu 30 Apr )

Today we will have a free day to explore the city of Xi'an, it's famous walls, bell and drum towers, pagodas and Muslim Quarter.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the ornate 14th-century Bell and Drum towers, which originally marked the sunrise and sunset

CNY 50

Wander through the atmospheric Muslim Quarter and visit the Xi'an Great Mosque, the first mosque constructed in China

CNY 30

Learn about the fascinating history of the ancient Chinese capital of Chang'an at the Shaanxi History Museum, without doubt one of the finest museums in China CNY 30

Visit the mind-blowing Tomb of Emperor Jingdi of the Han Dynasty, containing 50,000 doll-sized terracotta figures CNY 90

Walk or cycle around the Ming Dynasty Xi'an City Wall, the largest city wall in the world CNY 90

Visit the impressive Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Xi'an's most famous landmark dating from the Tang and Ming Dynasties CNY 90

Visit the Forest of Stelae Museum, a collection of 3000 stone tablets of Chinese calligraphy that has been collected here since 1057 CNY 75

## Day 31: Yan'an ( Fri 01 May )

Today we make our way to the city of Yan'an. Yan'an is famous for being the ending point for those on the 'Long March', and became the CCP headquarters for a brief period. During our time here we have an included visit to the Revolutionary Museum and the CCP Headquarters site.

In Yan'an we will stay in a local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-6 hours (please note that all drive times given here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the Revolution Museum and the Yangjialing Headquarters site, the former headquarters of Mao Tse Tung's Communist Party during the revolution Included in Kitty

### About Yan'an:

When Mao Tse Tung's diminished communist armies pitched up here at the end of the Long March (a retreat from the nationalist armies of Chiang Kai-Shek during the Chinese Civil War), it signalled the beginning of Yan'an's brief period in the sun. For 12 years, from 1935 to 1947, this backwater town was the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) headquarters. During our time here we will have a chance to step back into history as we explore the area and the CCP Museum located there.

## Day 32: Lijiashan ( Sat 02 May )

Today we continue our journey to visit the ancient village of Lijiashan, famed for settlement of cave dwellers and still home to more than 600 families.

In Lijiashan we will stay in a cave room, run by a local family and set up for guests.

*Please note that some caves include a traditional 'Kang Stove bed'. The Kang bed is a hollow platform made from bricks that is used both as a bed and as a work area, these are common in remote villages in Northern China. In winter a coal fire can be lit under the bed, providing a huge amount of warmth day and night and it is very common for the whole family to sleep on one large bed. This means there may be times that members of the group may have to share 1 large bed with others in the group.*

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Stay overnight in a local guesthouse built into a cave, in the cliff-side village of Lijiashan

Included in Kitty

### About Lijiashan:

Lijiashan, located in China's Shanxi province, is famed for its cave houses - this remote 550-year-old village, hugging a hillside set back from the Yellow River, has hundreds of cave dwellings scaling 9 storeys. It makes for a wonderful and atmospheric stop on our route through northeastern China.

## Day 33 to 35: Pingyao, Lijiashan ( Sun 03 May to Tue 05 May )

We will set off early this morning for an included visit to the Black Dragon Temple just outside of Lijiashan. We will then drive to China's best-preserved ancient walled town, Pingyao.

Estimated Drive Time - 2-3 hours.

We will stay for 3 nights in Pingyao, giving us plenty of time to explore this ancient town and surrounding sites such as the Mian Shan Mountain Resort and the Zhangbi Underground City.

In Pingyao we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the beautiful and ornate Black Dragon temple near Lijiashan

Included in Kitty

Freely explore the old town of Pingyao, a well preserved walled city that offers a fantastic glimpse into 'Old China'

Included in Kitty

Visit the incredible Shuanglin Temple near Pingyao, with its 2000 colourful sculptures of various gods and warriors

CNY 25

Visit the 10th-century Zhenguo Temple, one of the oldest wooden buildings in China

CNY 25

Take a day trip out to the impressive Wang family compound and the Zhang Bi underground village near Pingyao

CNY 205

Take a day trip to the photogenic Mian Shan Mountain Resort, and explore the incredible array of buildings and scenery there

CNY 160

### About Pingyao:

Pingyao is an exceptionally well-preserved example of a traditional Han Chinese city, and was founded in the 14th Century CE. Its urban fabric shows the evolution of architectural styles and town planning in Imperial China over five centuries. Of special interest are the imposing buildings associated with banking, for which Pingyao was the major centre for the whole of China in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. It is a wonderful slice of 'old China' on our trip through an otherwise very modern area of the country.

## Day 36 to 37: Wutai Shan ( Wed 06 May to Thu 07 May )

This morning we continue to the stunning mountainous area known as Wutai Shan, one of the holiest sites of Chinese Buddhism and a major centre of pilgrimage in the country.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-5 hours.

On the following day we will have a full day to explore the area and visit its incredible array of temples and religious sites.

In Wutai Shan we will stay in a basic local hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the myriad of temples at Wutai Shan, one of the Four Sacred Mountains of

Included in Kitty

## Chinese Buddhism

### About Wutai Shan:

Wutai Shan is one of the Four Sacred Mountains of Chinese Buddhism, and Buddhists believe the area to be the earthly abode of the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Manjushri. For a thousand years Wutai Shan has been a focus of pilgrimage for the Chinese, Tibetans, Mongols, and Manchus alike. As host to over 53 sacred monasteries spread through the town and the surrounding mountains, Wutai Shan is home to many of China's most important monasteries and temples, and has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009.

### Day 38 to 39: Datong ( Fri 08 May to Sat 09 May )

Today we will drive to the city of Datong. We will have an included visit to the incredible Hanging Monastery en route.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

On the following day we will head out of Datong in the truck on an included visit to the awe-inspiring Yungang Buddha Caves.

In Datong we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

#### Activity

#### Approximate Cost

2 nights to explore Datong's Hanging Monastery and the stunning Yungang Caves

Included in Kitty

See the beautiful and ornate Nine Dragon Screen, a screen of glazed tiles depicting nine multi-coloured interweaving dragons

CNY 10

Explore the phenomenal site of the Yungang Caves, a network of 252 caves containing over 51,000 incredibly crafted sculptures of Buddha from the 5th and 6th centuries

Included in Kitty

### About Datong:

The historic city of Datong dates back nearly 2,500 years. The main attraction here is the Yungang Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage complex of 21 caves containing over 50,000 Buddhist statues, some of which are the oldest of this type in China. This is one of the most outstanding Buddhist grottoes in China and spans over 1,000 years of construction, starting back in the 5th Century CE - looking at the rock art you will be able to pick out influences from an amazing variety of different cultures, including Greek, Persian and Indian.

South of Datong is the phenomenal Hanging Monastery, a wooden monastery that is over 1,400 years old and beautifully located clinging to the edge of a cliff. The monastery has an awe-inspiring location, consists of over 40 different halls and is home to an impressive array of

bronze, stone, clay and iron statues.

## Day 40: Jinshanling ( Sun 10 May )

This morning we will drive to one of the world's most incredible sights - the Jinshanling section of the Great Wall of China! We will have time this afternoon and the following morning to thoroughly explore and walk along the Great Wall.

In Jinshanling we will stay in a basic local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Fully explore the awe-inspiring Great Wall of China at Jinshanling, one of the most spectacular stone sections of the wall

Included in Kitty

### About Jinshanling:

The Great Wall of China was built over several centuries to protect the historical northern borders of China from raids and invasions from nomadic groups from the Eurasian Steppe. The earliest sections were built all the way back in the 5th Century BCE during the Warring States period, although little of this still remains.

The most famous and enduring sections of the Great Wall are the stone wall stretches in the northeast that were built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE) - these are the iconic sections that snake over the mountains in a phenomenal feat of engineering. All in all, Ming walls measure a staggering 8,850 km long in total.

The Jinshanling section of the Great Wall is one of the most spectacular sections along the whole length, located in a beautiful mountainous area northeast of Beijing - it is over 10kms long, crosses 5 mountain passes, and contains 70 towers. Built from 1570 CE during the Ming Dynasty, some sections have been expertly restored to their original condition, while other parts are left in a natural eroded state as they approach Simatai (another famous section of the Wall to the east). It is an incredible place to explore on foot.

## Day 41 to 42: Chengde ( Mon 11 May to Tue 12 May )

This morning we will spend some more time exploring the Great Wall of China. We will then continue with a short drive to the city of Chengde.

Estimated Drive Time - 1-2 hours.

On the following day we will have a full day to explore the Puning Temple and the famous Imperial Summer Resort.

In Chengde we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

See the beautiful Putuo Zongcheng Temple, modelled after the famous Potala Palace in Tibet CNY 80

Explore the incredible Imperial Summer Resort in Chengde, a vast park with a variety of gardens, pagodas, temples and palaces from various regions of China Included in Kitty

### About Chengde:

Chengde is located in Hubei Province, the heavily populated region that surrounds Beijing. Once a royal city, this 18th Century imperial resort town has plenty of historic monuments to boast about. The imperial family would have moved here during the hot summer months, because of the cool and refreshing mountain air.

There are many historical sites to explore, including the regal gardens (the largest in China), the Imperial Summer Villa and a profusion of temples. Many of the temples and monasteries have a Mongolian and Tibetan feel - this is largely because of the legacy of Emperor Qinlong, who wanted to assimilate both regions into his empire.

In recent years, mirroring the city's history, Chengde has become a very popular weekend retreat for the wealthy of Beijing - and so it's home to some excellent restaurants.

### Day 43 to 44: Beijing ( Wed 13 May to Thu 14 May )

Today we complete our journey to China's chaotic and evocative capital, Beijing!

Estimated Drive Time - 3-5 hours.

On the following day we will head out on the Beijing metro to the city centre's famous Tiananmen Square, which we will walk through and then take a tour of the Forbidden City. We will then have a free afternoon to fully explore the many sights, sounds and flavours of Beijing.

In Beijing we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

#### Activity

#### Approximate Cost

Discover all about the varied and interesting history of China at the National Museum, with its huge collection of over a million artifacts Free

Head out to see an acrobatic or martial arts show in Beijing, always an incredible mix of athleticism and choreography CNY 250

Guided visit to the Forbidden City in Beijing Included in Kitty



Explore the Ming Tombs	CNY 60
Explore the vast Temple of Heaven, once the site of an annual religious ceremony conducted by the Emperor to pray for a good harvest	CNY 10
Visit the beautiful Tibetan-style Lama Temple (Yonghe Temple) in Beijing	Free
See the iconic modern 'Bird's Nest' Stadium, the centrepiece of the 2008 Olympic Games	CNY 50

### About Beijing:

Beijing is the throbbing, bustling capital of China. First populated way back in the 11th Century BCE, Beijing has been the hub of China for three millennia and has evolved into the incredibly modern city that it is today. It controls the whole country and little goes on without Beijing's authority.

It's a great place to visit as a traveller, as there's a huge amount to see and do. Take a tour of the Forbidden City and learn about the history of the Ming Dynasty, or discover the wonders of the Summer Palace. With so much on offer we recommend you allowing yourself plenty of time in this amazing city, it's worth allowing yourself a few extra days here before or after a trip with us.

### Day 45: Beijing ( Fri 15 May )

**Border Information:** if joining in Beijing, you will most likely enter China at Beijing Capital International Airport (IATA code: PEK).

There will be a short group meeting today at 10:00am - please look out for a note from your tour leader at the hotel reception with more information about this important meeting. The rest of the day will be free to explore the incredible city of Beijing!

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Beijing before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Beijing.

In Beijing we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Hotel for the night: Hu Guo Si Hotel

**Hu Guo Si Hotel**  
 No 125 Hu Guo Si Street  
 Xicheng District 100035  
 Beijing  
 China  
 Tel - +86 10 6618 1113

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the Ming Tombs	CNY 60
Guided visit to the Forbidden City in Beijing	CNY 60
Discover all about the varied and interesting history of China at the National Museum, with its huge collection of over a million artifacts	Free
Head out to see an acrobatic or martial arts show in Beijing, always an incredible mix of athleticism and choreography	CNY 250
Explore the vast Temple of Heaven, once the site of an annual religious ceremony conducted by the Emperor to pray for a good harvest	CNY 10
Visit the beautiful Tibetan-style Lama Temple (Yonghe Temple) in Beijing	Free
See the iconic modern 'Bird's Nest' Stadium, the centrepiece of the 2008 Olympic Games	CNY 50

## Day 46: Erlian ( Sat 16 May )

Today we leave the Chinese capital behind us as we begin our overland journey towards Mongolia. Today will be a long drive day to reach the border town of Erlian.

We will either wild camp outside Erlian or stay in a basic local hotel, depending on weather conditions and group preferences.

Estimated Drive Time - 10-12 hours (please note that all drive times given here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

### About Erlian:

Erlian (otherwise known as Erenhot) is the border town on the very edge of China before crossing into Mongolia. The town lies in Inner Mongolia on the edge of the Gobi Desert. The area around the town is known for the discovery of a number of different dinosaurs, many of which are celebrated with statues lining the edge of the road on the

way into the town.

## Day 47: Sainshand ( Sun 17 May )

**Border information:** Exit China at Erlian, enter Mongolia at Zamyn-Uud.

This morning we cross the border into Mongolia. Please be aware that border procedures can take around 5 hours here. Once we have made it into Mongolia we will continue our overland journey north.

We will aim to wild camp near the town of Sainshand tonight.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit the Khamaryn Khiid Monastery near Sainshand, dedicated to Danzan Ravjaa, a 19th-century religious leader of the 'Red Hat' branch of Buddhism	Free
Visit the modern working Buddhist monastery of Dechinchoinkhorlin Khiid, near Sainshand	Free

## Day 48: Ulaanbaatar ( Mon 18 May )

This morning we may have the opportunity to visit the Dechinchoinkhorlin Monastery in Sainshand before we continue our drive to Mongolia's vibrant capital of Ulaanbaatar (please note this is not always open for visitors).

In Ulaanbaatar we will stay in a local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

### About Ulaanbaatar:

Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar (affectionately known as UB), is a city where new meets old as elderly Mongolians in traditional dress mingle with the nation's young business elite. Mongolia's former close relationship with the USSR is evident in the Soviet-style architecture and city layout.

Explore the city's many museums to learn about the country's turbulent history, including the reign of the most famous of Mongolian historical figures - the feared and respected Genghis Khan. One of the most fascinating is the Intellectual Museum where you can learn about the history and culture of this intriguing country through puzzles, toys and magic tricks! There are plenty of things to do and see in Ulaanbaatar, visit the Museum of Natural History with its excellent dinosaur display, the Fine Arts Museum with its impressive selection of local art and traditional works or the Winter Palace Museum of Bogd Khan, which is stocked full of fascinating artefacts.

Mongolia's largest and most important monastery, the lively Gandan

Khiid, is well worth a visit to learn about Buddhism, the main religion of Mongolia.

## Day 49: Ulaanbaatar ( Tue 19 May )

**Border information:** If you are joining in Ulaanbaatar, you will most likely enter Mongolia at Ulaanbaatar Chinggis Khaan International Airport (IATA code: ULN).

There will be a group meeting today at 6:00pm - please look out for a note from your tour leader at the hotel reception with more information about this important meeting, but please do not be alarmed if the note is not there as this is often a travel day for the tour leader and they may arrive in the afternoon. If you arrive early, the rest of the day will be free to explore the Mongolian capital!

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Ulaanbaatar before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Ulaanbaatar.

In Ulaanbaatar we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Hotel for the night: Zaluuchuud Hotel

### **Zaluuchuud Hotel**

Baga Toiruu 43

Sukhbaatar District

Ulaanbaatar

Mongolia

Tel - +976 1132 5544

## Day 50: Ulaanbaatar ( Wed 20 May )

This morning we head out on a guided tour to see some of Ulaanbaatar's best and most treasured sights, including the Gandan Monastery and the National Museum.

This afternoon we will spend a few hours exploring the Black Market. This huge market contains every single item a Mongolian may need, so a trip here will certainly give visitors a fascinating insight into people's lives, whether they are nomads or urban apartment dwellers.

### **Activity**

### **Approximate Cost**

Take a guided tour of the Gandan Monastery, the largest Buddhist Monastery in Mongolia

Included in Kitty

Visit the infamous Black Market in Ulaanbaatar, and explore the traditional clothes stalls and saddle markets within

Included in Kitty

Head out for a cultural show or a

USD 12

performance from a traditional folk band, featuring the unique art of throat-singing

Visit the intriguing International Intellectual Museum, dedicated to puzzles and games made by local artists MNT 3000

Discover a remnant of Mongolia's imperial past at the Winter Palace of the Bogd Khan MNT 6000

See the superb collection of paintings, carvings and sculptures at The Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts MNT 5000

Explore the incredible history of the country from the Neolithic era to the present day, at the National Museum of Mongolia Included in Kitty

Discover the unique showcase of religious art and learn about the Buddhist history of Mongolia at the Chojin Lama Temple Museum MNT 5000

Visit the Grand Chinggis Khan Square and see the statue of Damdin Sukhbaatar, one of the leaders of the struggle for independence in the 1920s Free

Climb to the Zaisan Memorial, an interesting remnant of Mongolia's communist past that affords incredible views over Ulaanbaatar Free

## Day 51: Ögii Lake ( Thu 21 May )

Today we drive out of the city and into the vast plains of Mongolia. We hope to arrive at Khar Bukh Balgas ruins in the early afternoon.

Khar Bukh Balgas was built during the Kitan period in about 1000CE, and was part of a chain of fortresses that were used to govern and control the northern region and borders of the Kitan state. Upon arrival at the site, we will explore the ruins and learn about the various kingdoms that dominated Mongolia during that era.

After our visit to the ruins we will drive to Ögii Lake where many nomadic families spend their summer. The lake is famed for its great

bird watching opportunities where it is not uncommon to spot at Swan Goose, White Spoonbill and Dalmatian Pelicans.

In Ögii Lake we will stay in a local nomadic ger-tent camp set up for guests. These are large gers, each usually containing 2 or 4 beds.

*Please note that we cannot give any accurate drive time estimations for our Mongolia trip as the journey times are heavily dependent on the state of roads, which is in turn heavily dependent on the weather. The roads in Mongolia are mostly dirt tracks in very poor condition, which means that an even greater degree of flexibility is needed for this trip in all regards.*

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

See the ancient Orkhon Inscriptions, two large monoliths with inscriptions in Old Turkic script

Included in Kitty

Explore the ruins of the 10th-century Kitan fortress of Khar Bukh Balgas, an interesting slice of Mongolia's pre-Genghis Khan history

Included in Kitty

### About Ögii Lake:

Ögii Lake is a shallow freshwater lake in central Mongolia, well known for its fish and birdlife. Almost half the lake is less than 3m deep.

## Day 52: Kharkhorin ( Fri 22 May )

Today we have an early start as we head to Mongolia's earliest capital, Kharkhorin (otherwise known as Karakoram).

Our first stop on the way to Kharkhorin will be at the Kultigen Monument. This massive stone tomb was built in honour of a Turkic prince and warrior killed in a nearby battle. We then continue on a fairly short drive to Kharkhorin.

Kharkhorin was famed throughout Asia at the capital of the Mongol Empire. We will visit the ruins of the old city, the Erdene Zuu monastery, and other historical monuments in the area.

In Kharkhorin we will stay in a ger camp.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the huge monastery of Erdene Zuu, Mongolia's oldest Buddhist monastery to survive the purges of the 1930s

Included in Kitty

Learn all about Karakorum, the former capital of the Mongol Empire that once stood here, at the Kharkhorin Museum

Included in Kitty

### About Kharkhorin:

The fabled city of Kharkhorin (otherwise known as Karakorum) began life as a command point for Genghis Khan's military conquest of China, but later became the capital of his son, Ögedei Khan in 1235 CE. Under Ögedei and his successors, Karakorum became a major site for world politics, and the famous Silver Tree of Karakorum was constructed the city centre - a large tree sculpted of silver and other precious metals rose up from the middle of the courtyard and loomed over the palace, with the branches of the tree extended into the building, silver fruit hung from the limbs and it had four golden serpents braided around the trunk, while within the top of the tree was placed a trumpet angel.

Unfortunately the Silver Tree no longer exists, but we will be sure to visit the Erdene Zuu Monastery - built in 1585 CE out of the ruins of the old city, it was the first great northern Mongolian monastery. Surviving the destruction of the communist purges of the 1930s, the monastery is the oldest Buddhist temple in Mongolia and is now a museum as well as a working monastery.

## **Day 53 to 54: Orkhon Valley ( Sat 23 May to Sun 24 May )**

Today we head south, driving into the stunning region of the Orkhon Valley. We will drive to the beautiful volcanic canyon that runs along the Orkhon River and we can take an easy hike along the canyon ending near a pool at the bottom of the Red Waterfalls where we can take a cool swim!

We will wild camp in a remote area of the Orkhon Valley tonight.

The following day we will continue our journey through the Orkhon Valley to the Tuvkhon Monastery, which we can embark on a two and a half hour trek to visit (the first hour will be uphill!). This monastery was established during the 1650s by Zanbazar, one of Mongolia's most respected religious leaders. The monastery's wooden buildings are integrated with a natural system of caves perched near a hilltop, from which you have beautiful views of the Orkhon Valley and the surrounding pine forests.

After our visit we will wild camp nearby.

*Please note that on occasion it is impossible to reach the Tuvkhon Monastery due to river flooding or the ground being impassable - the roads are in a particularly bad state here and are very susceptible to being rendered impossible to drive on if there has been rain recently. Although we will do our best to make this visit, your understanding is appreciated if we cannot.*

*Please also note that the order of our visits to the 2 main highlights in the Orkhon Valley is interchangeable, depending on the road conditions.*

### **Activity**

### **Approximate Cost**

Explore the stunning volcanic and forested landscapes of the Orkhon Valley and see Ulaan Tsutgalan, Mongolia's largest waterfall

Included in Kitty

Hike up through the forests to the beautiful Tuvkhon Monastery on the summit of Ulaan Uul mountain      Included in Kitty

### About Orkhon Valley:

For one of the best examples of Mongolia's legendary natural beauty, a journey through the Orkhon Valley is unbeatable. The stunning valleys, volcanic rocks, waterfalls, forests, streams, wild yaks, and nomadic ger tents dotted around the landscape make for an unbelievably scenic trip. The valley is also home to the Tuvkhon Monastery - one of Mongolia's oldest Buddhist monasteries, Tuvkhon was first established in 1648 CE by the 14-year-old Zanabazar, the first spiritual head of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia on his return from his studies in Tibet.

## Day 55 to 56: Tsenkher ( Mon 25 May to Tue 26 May )

Today our trip heads north, crossing the Khangai Nuruu Mountains through a series of passes until we reach an area that Mongolians call 'The Paradise of the Horse Herders' due to its lush grasses and open valleys.

We drive to the Tsenkher hot springs, where water flows out of the ground at 82°C, and where we can enjoy a relaxing soak.

The following day we will take a short, easy walk to meet one of the many nomadic families that spend their summers in the region. The afternoon is free to explore the valley and surrounding hills either by foot or by horseback.

In Tsenkher we will stay at a ger camp.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Head out horse riding through the incredible forest scenery surrounding Tsenkher (if helmets available)

USD 32

Walk around the surrounding valley and visit one of the local nomadic families to learn all about their way of life (if available)

Included in Kitty

Enjoy a relaxing soak in the natural hot springs

Included in Kitty

### About Tsenkher:

The Tsenkher hot springs, on the edge of the Orkhon Valley, are a set of naturally-heated springs in a beautiful forest-lined valley in central Mongolia. There are many nomadic families here in the summer living a traditional life in their gers, which we hope to be able to visit while in the area. It is also a superb area for short walks and horse riding.



## Day 57: Tsetserleg, Tamir River ( Wed 27 May )

This morning we drive to Tsetserleg, the provincial capital, where we will make a short visit to the local market. If time permits, we will also visit the provincial museum.

We will then continue our journey north past the Tamir river, and will wild camp tonight.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

See a variety of fascinating exhibits about the Mongolian way of life at the Arkhangai Aimag Museum in Tsetserleg (if time allows)

MNT 5000

See the huge rock monolith of Taikhar Chuluu, covered in inscriptions in a myriad of different scripts dating from the 6th century to the modern era

Included in Kitty

## Day 58: Chuulut Canyon ( Thu 28 May )

Today we continue north past Taikhar Chuluu (a massive rock which is connected to local mythology) and the Chuulut Canyon to arrive at our ger camp near the Khorgo volcano.

In Chuulut Canyon we will stay at a nearby ger camp.

## Day 59: Khorgo ( Fri 29 May )

This morning we will take a hike to the top of the Khorgo Volcano and take in the incredible views over its perfect crater. From the top of the volcano we continue our hike through fields studded with pine trees, stopping off en route at the Yellow Dog Cave, an interesting volcanic phenomenon.

We will then return to the truck and continue our journey north. We will aim wild camp tonight in the remote plains north of Khorgo.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the incredible volcanic landscape of Khorgo and Terkhiin Tsagaan Lake by foot

Included in Kitty

### About Khorgo:

Khorgo (sometimes referred to as Taryatu-Chuulutu, meaning "rocks of Tariat"), is an extinct volcanic field on the northern slopes of the Khangai Mountains. The volcano is notable for its solidified lava bubbles, which the locals have named "basalt yurts".

## Day 60 to 61: Zuun Lake, Mörön ( Sat 30 May to Sun 31 May )

Over the next few days we continue driving north on one of Mongolia's most beautiful routes, crossing high mountain passes, vast grasslands, and small creeks! We will pass by the beautiful alpine Lake Zuun en route.

We hope to arrive at Mörön, the provincial capital, the following afternoon. We will visit the local market, Danzadarjaa Monastery and the local museum. If we don't have time on this section of the trip, then we can visit the town after coming back from Khövsgöl Lake.

We will aim to wild camp near Zuun Lake and near the town of Mörön.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Discover the mysterious ancient Deer Stones near Mörön, erected by Bronze Age nomads over 3000 years ago	Included in Kitty
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### About Mörön:

Mörön is the capital of northern Mongolia's Khövsgöl province. It is famous for its nearby mysterious Deer Stones - ancient megaliths carved with symbols, most commonly depictions of flying deer. These ancient stones are found throughout in Siberia and Mongolia and very little is known about the people that carved them.

## Day 62 to 63: Khövsgöl Lake ( Mon 01 Jun to Tue 02 Jun )

This morning we will drive out to an ancient burial site featuring Mongolia's mysterious deer stones, these are memorial stones representing important leaders and warriors, carved with deer motifs. After visiting the site, we continue our trip northward to one of the world's biggest fresh water sources, the stunning Khövsgöl Lake.

Khövsgöl Lake and its amazing surroundings are home to several of Mongolia's ethnic minorities as well as a refuge for a wide variety of wildlife. One of the most interesting ethnic groups living near the lake is the Tsaatan, also known as 'The Reindeer People'. A small tribe of Tsaatan consisting of about 40 families lives with its herds of reindeer in the forests around the lake. These graceful animals provide the tribe with all its basic needs - milk, meat and transportation. As there are very few Tsaatan left and this is a mobile population, we may meet them but there are no guarantees - however, the scenery of the area is well worth the exploration.

The following day we will take a hike around the forests and meadows near the lake. Lying at about 1650m above sea level, surrounded by mountains rising above 3100m, the waters of Khovsgol are deep and spectacularly clear and pure. We will hike through thick pine forests carpeted with flowers and explore the setting of Mongolia's 'Blue Pearl'.

In Khövsgöl Lake we will stay at a ger camp.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Take a horse ride through the incredible Siberian forest scenery surrounding Khövsgöl Lake (if time allows) MNT 10000

Walk through the beautiful area of Khövsgöl and try to meet the local Tsataan Reindeer Herders (if available) Included in Kitty

### About Khövsgöl Lake:

The spectacular Khövsgöl Lake is in the far north of Mongolia, near the Russian border. It is the second largest freshwater lake in Asia and holds around 70% of Mongolia's fresh water supply. The lake has some of the most magnificent scenery in all of Mongolia, with beautiful hills and forests surrounding the area. The lake is also home to the reindeer-herding Tsataan people, as well as being an area of unique wildlife such as ibexes, elks, wolves, and sables.

### Day 64 to 66: Selenge River, Bulgan ( Wed 03 Jun to Fri 05 Jun )

We will spend the next 3 days crossing central-northern Mongolia on our way back towards the capital of Ulaanbaatar. The long road offers diversified landscapes, from vast, open steppes to beautiful sand dunes.

We will aim to wildcamp in the plains east of Mörön on the first day of this journey, by the Selenge River on the next day, and on the outskirts of the town of Bulgan on the day after that.

### Day 67: Amarbayasgalant Monastery ( Sat 06 Jun )

This morning we will try to visit the Amarbayasgalant Monastery. Built between 1727 and 1736 by the Manchu Emperor Enkh Amgalan, Amarbayasgalant is among the largest monasteries in Mongolia to have survived the purges of the 1930s. With about 60 monks living and studying here, the monastery functions today as one of Mongolia's central religious institutions, and consists of 29 different temples, all built in the classic Tibetan style.

Tonight we will wild camp near the monastery.

#### Activity

#### Approximate Cost

Visit the Chinese-style Buddhist monastery of Amarbayasgalant near the Selenge River Included in Kitty

### About Amarbayasgalant Monastery:

The Amarbayasgalant Monastery is one of the largest Buddhist monastic centers in Mongolia, located in the remote Iven Valley near the Selenge River. The monastery was established in 1736 CE to serve as a final resting place for the remains

of Zanabazar, the first spiritual head of Buddhism in Mongolia - his remains were interred there in 1779 CE. Fortunately, Amarbayasgalant was one of the very few monasteries to have partly survived the devastation of the 1937 communist purges.

## Day 68: Ulaanbaatar ( Sun 07 Jun )

Today we have a full day drive from northern Mongolia back to the city of Ulaanbaatar. This evening is free to relax and explore, and to have a well-earned final meal and drinks in one of the city's many restaurants!

In Ulaanbaatar we will stay in our comfortable joining hotel.

## Day 69: Ulaanbaatar ( Mon 08 Jun )

**Border information:** If you are leaving in Ulaanbaatar, you will most likely exit Mongolia at Ulaanbaatar Chinggis Khaan International Airport (IATA code: ULN).

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Ulaanbaatar. Please note there is no accommodation included on the trip tonight - please contact the Sales Team if you are interested in booking extra nights of accommodation in order to fully explore and take part in some of the optional activities listed below.

### IMPORTANT NOTES

The routes, activities and places visited described in these trip notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only.

These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, and information about kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

We update these notes regularly, so please ensure you have an up-to-date version of these trip notes.

We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed. It sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons - climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. By their very nature, overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure. You should expect that some of these areas do not adhere to 'Western' safety standards.

### EXPLORATORY TRIP WARNING - THIS IS A NEW TRIP FOR US!

Please note that all or part of this trip is a brand new itinerary, and could be going through completely new areas for Dragoman. This is what we call a New or Exploratory trip, and it means that all the passengers on these trips for the first season are the route's pioneers!

However, while we have thoroughly researched all aspects of this new route and put the itinerary together with the best of intentions, please note that your crew will be finding a lot of information out for us on the ground, will be playing a lot of things by ear, and may alter the itinerary slightly in places where it becomes necessary. Most trips will have slight or significant changes made to them after this first season, and frankly we would be very surprised if an Exploratory trip was to run perfectly to the published

itinerary. Usually we find that this is rarely a problem but rather an exciting feature, that there are much more pleasant surprises in store than unpleasant ones, and these Exploratory trips are a fantastic opportunity to shape the trip as a group.

However, the warning is sincere and these trips must be viewed as Exploratory - if this concerns you or you would rather stick to a tried-and-tested itinerary, then we recommend that you wait a year or two until we have this itinerary perfected following operating it many times, or of course to consider one of the more established trips in our extensive portfolio.

## **PHYSICAL PREPARATION**

### **PHYSICAL PREPARATION FOR ASIA ITINERARIES**

In Asia you will need to be healthy enough to cope with extremes of climates from the hot deserts through to the colds of the high mountains. There are some high altitudes in places and many places where walking around for several hours is the only way to explore (e.g. The Great Wall of China, walking tours in Uzbekistan, exploring the historical sites of India, etc.).

Overland travelling can be demanding - long, rough travel days, dusty conditions can be challenging to some. You will need to be fit enough to help every day with the camp chores (cooking, washing up, general camp set up) as well as putting up and taking down your own tent. There are some long driving days and some early morning starts.

The step up into the overland vehicle, while not overly high, can become tiring and you need to judge yourself to be physically fit enough to haul yourself up and down the step at least 8-10 times a day. By and large, our Asia trips have a good range of hotel accommodation mixed up with camping so that life is not too rough.

We will be travelling to areas in remote locations where medical assistance will not be available. If you have a medical condition such as a heart condition that would put you at risk, we would suggest that this is not the trip for you. Also, please be aware that should an emergency occur, there is likely to be a considerable delay in accessing medical care, and by joining our trip you accept this risk.

## **VISA INFORMATION**

Many countries that we visit on our travels will require visas to enter. Some are best obtained before you leave home, and others can be obtained en-route. Whilst the ultimate responsibility for obtaining visas is yours, we will endeavour to assist you wherever possible.

The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. The information provided is given in good faith and we do try to keep the visa information as up to date as possible. Please read the information very carefully to make sure everything is clear and you aware of what you need to do. Please also be aware that rules surrounding visas do change, often suddenly, and without prior warning. This is why it is important that you also double-check the information we provide for yourself.

For visas that are needed in advance, you may wish to submit the applications directly to the relevant embassy or consulate. If you require any supporting documentation for your visa applications, Dragoman will obtain this on your behalf as part of your trip price - we will contact you to request additional information in order to make this application for you.

However, for trips that involve multiple visas, you may find it beneficial to use a specialist visa agency to assist you with your applications. While this does sometimes increase the cost, it usually makes the process much easier for you.

As you will often need to submit your passport together with your applications, we recommend that you avoid making any travel plans in the weeks leading up to your departure.

Most countries require that your passport is valid for at least 6 months after your entry into the country.

For trips that are not yet guaranteed, you may find yourself in the position whereby you will need to start the visa application process prior to your trip being guaranteed - in this situation we still advise you **not** to purchase flights until your trip is guaranteed. However, you **can** start your visa application process, ensuring that when applying for your visas or letters of invitation that you allow several days before and after your entry into the country to allow for delays, availability of flights, etc.

## CHINA

**VERY IMPORTANT - Dragoman will require a clear colour scan of your passport as soon as possible after booking for all trips in China, please send this to us as soon as you can. Please note it must be clear, with no shadows and show the entire passport page as well as the adjacent page. This must be an actual scan of your passport and photos will not be accepted. We will also require an ID photo and a scanned copy of your China Visa at least 8 weeks prior to your arrival at the Chinese border.**

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will** need a visa to enter China as a tourist for up to 90 days. You will need a Letter of Invitation from a Chinese agent in order to make the visa application, and you must obtain the visa **in advance**. You cannot obtain the visa at the border in any circumstance.

Firstly you will need to apply for the Letter of Invitation through Dragoman - we will contact you requesting further information in order for us to make this application on your behalf, a service that is included in the trip price. These can take several weeks to issue, and will be emailed to you once they are ready.

After your Letter of Invitation has been issued, you can use this to apply for the visa **in advance** at a Chinese Embassy in your home country. You can either apply yourself directly to the embassy, or hire a specialist visa agency to make the application on your behalf (which is recommended, especially if you are applying for several visas). Dragoman will also provide a letter confirming your participation in the trip and a list of our hotels, which you may need for the application - in some cases the Chinese Embassy may ask for a day-by-day itinerary with the hotels listed, which we can provide when needed.

You will need to apply at the Chinese Embassy in your home country, as your application is far more likely to be approved. Although there is no official reason why you should not be issued a visa at any Chinese embassy, their consular officials are notorious for constantly changing their minds about whether they will approve a visa for 'non-resident' applicants, and it depends heavily on the political climate of the time. Please note if you are applying for a China Visa in the UK you will also now need to attend an appointment in London to have your fingerprints taken.

**IMPORTANT NOTE - Please NEVER mention Kashgar, Urumqi, Turpan, Lhasa, Xinjiang or Tibet anywhere on your Chinese visa application form - this will almost certainly result in your application being rejected. When filling out your Chinese visa form, please only declare the places that are listed on your Chinese Letter of Invitation once it is issued.**

If you are asked to provide a host in China on your visa form, please use the details of the Chinese agent that issued your Letter of Invitation (this will be printed on the letter).

You **will not** need a China visa if you are entering Tibet from Nepal (Northbound Tibet trip), but you **will** need a China visa if you are going to Tibet from Xi'an (Southbound Tibet trip). Please see the Tibet note for details on the visa requirements for travelling through Tibet.

A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from [areas with risk of yellow fever transmission](#) (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

## MONGOLIA

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and most EU countries **will** need a visa to enter Mongolia as a tourist for up to 30 days. Citizens of Canada **will not** need a visa for visits up to 30 days, and citizens of the USA **will not** need a visa for visits of up to 90 days. Citizens of other countries

should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required.

If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it **in advance** – this will not usually require a Letter of Invitation. You can either apply yourself directly to the embassy, or hire a specialist visa agency to make the application on your behalf (which is recommended, especially if you are applying for several visas).

There are certain circumstances where the visa can be obtained on arrival at Ulaanbaatar Chinggis Khan International Airport (usually when there is no Mongolian Embassy in your country of residence).

If you are on a longer combination trip (such as Istanbul to Ulaanbaatar) and you need a visa, we advise you to obtain it in the **Mongolian Embassy in Beijing en route** with the help of your crew.

If you are asked to provide an address in Mongolia on your visa form, please use the address below:

*Zaluuchuud Hotel,  
Baga Toiruu-43,  
Sukhbaatar District.,  
Ulaanbaatar,  
Mongolia  
Tel: +976 11 325544*

If you are asked to provide an inviting party in Mongolia on your visa form, please contact Dragoman or your agent and we will provide you with a suitable name and address to put as this contact.

## LAOS

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most EU countries **will** need a visa to enter Laos as a tourist for up to 30 days. Citizens of Switzerland, Luxembourg, Russia South Korea and Japan **will not** need a visa.

The easiest way to get a visa is to obtain it **on arrival**. This is available for almost all nationalities at most land borders and airports into Laos (including those used on Dragoman trips) – the cost varies according to nationality, and you will need 1 passport photo.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required, and whether it will be necessary to obtain a Letter of Invitation (only a small number of nationalities need to obtain a Letter of Invitation).

A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from [areas with risk of yellow fever transmission](#) (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

## PERSONAL SPENDING

### PERSONAL SPENDING – ASIA

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on this trip, we recommend you allow between USD15-30 per day for Central Asia, China and Burma and between USD10-USD20 per day for India, Nepal and South East Asia.

This will cover individual expenses such as drinks, meals whilst out and also when staying in hotels, souvenirs, tips, and personal permits.

For trips in Southern India that occur over Christmas and New Year please allow approximately **USD160** extra on the kitty for seasonal increases in accommodation costs.

## ASIA CURRENCIES AND CASH

It is not really worth trying to buy local currencies before you travel. Do also bear in mind that many countries have strict regulations about the amount of their own local currency you are allowed to import -

if you are found with amounts in excess of the allowed amounts, it may well be confiscated!

Bringing a sensible mix of cash and ATM cards is the best way to bring money out, but it's always a good idea to bring plenty of cash that you can change (USD and EUR are commonly changed throughout Asia) rather than relying on cards. Apart from the convenience of being able to change money in many more places, you will sometimes get a much better exchange rate for cash. ATMs are available in most areas but are not always reliable. You may also find your card doesn't work in all ATM's. Credit cards such as Visa and MasterCard are accepted in some major cities, but be prepared for very high commission charges.

Banks and moneychangers in most countries in Asia will now only accept bills with a metallic strip running top to bottom of the bill and which are **no more than 8 years old**. You should not take worn or damaged notes, or any that have been written on. Please also bring a mixture of small and large denominations - you may get a better rate for changing larger denomination bills, but in more remote areas it can be difficult to change amounts over USD50.

Please note that due to restrictions on currency conversion for foreigners in many Asian countries, it may not be possible to change leftover local currency back into USD after your trip, so please plan your budget well by withdrawing/exchanging what you need as you go.

## WHAT ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW

### Overland Lifestyle and Trip Suitability

Dragoman was founded in 1981, and has had many years of experience of leading overland trips across 4 continents. Overlanding is all about sharing a great travelling experience with like-minded people. On your trip you'll travel in one of Dragoman's purpose-built iconic expedition vehicles on an off the beaten track adventure along rugged roads, experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the world up-close. Your journey will be overland, sometimes across vast distances, so some long days spent driving are inevitable - but these will be interspersed with breaks of a day or two at a destination or activity. On an overland journey, you are more than just a passenger and everyone gets involved setting up camp - we supply the tent but it's up to you to pitch it! As part of your trip, you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting firewood or water, luggage loading, organising food, stores, etc.

Like all great adventures, the more you put in the more you'll get out!

We are looking forward to welcoming you on one of our overland journeys, but before we do there are a few things we would like to draw to your attention.

[Back to top ^](#)

### Who Travels with Dragoman?

Our groups are made up of people from around the world, and are always an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split between males to females, and between solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. We believe that overlanding should be open to as many people as possible, and so although we have a minimum age limit of 18 (or 7 on our Family Trips), as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you, whatever your age is. One of the wonderful aspects of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way, and the variety of people that you will meet.

[Back to top ^](#)

### Group Size

The maximum group size we take on our overland journeys ranges from 19 to 22 depending on the geographical location; however the average number of passengers is more likely to be around 16.

Please note that there is an overlap of 2 trips in Cuzco and during the Inca Treks. This means a group starting a trip in Cuzco will embark on the Inca Trail at the same time as a group finishing in or travelling through Cuzco. In practical terms this means there could be more than 22 group members in Cuzco and on the Inca Trail at the same time.



Please note that there is also an overlap of 2 trips in Zanzibar. This means a group starting a trip in Nairobi, for example, will visit Zanzibar at the same time as a group starting their trip there. In practical terms this means there could be more than 22 group members in Zanzibar at the same time.

Please also note that on some departures there may be more than one truck doing the same route. This means that you will be in the same hotel or campsite as another Dragoman group on some days. To ensure that you are not always at the same place at the same time as another group, your itinerary will most likely be slightly altered from the itinerary advertised in these trip notes.

## **Our Crew and Guides**

Our crew are passionate about travel and are always up for adventure. It takes someone special to become a Dragoman leader. Our crew undergo the most intensive training program of all the overland companies, spending 8 weeks learning the ropes at our base in Suffolk, UK, and then up to 6 months on the road as a trainee. Our crew are trained to manage and operate the trip safely and efficiently and their duties include: planning the trip according to the itinerary, driving and maintaining the truck, securing services of local guides, general logistics, health and safety, liaising with bureaucracy, dealing with issues where needed and offering advice and support to our customers. In addition they have a basic knowledge of the places visited and will be able to offer suggestions of things to do and see. Dragoman endeavours to provide the services of experienced crew, however, due to the seasonality of travel, situations may arise where your tour leader is new to a particular region or training other crew, new to the area.

On all Dragoman overlanding trips, we usually have 2 western crew but please be aware that there may be times when one crew member has to leave the trip due to unforeseen circumstances such as visa issues, illness of a group member, etc. On some of our trips we have 1 western crew and 1 local driver instead of 2 western crew. On trips south of Nairobi in East and Southern Africa we will also have an African camp master/cook who is in charge of running the camp and organising all of the meals. Their knowledge of the local produce makes shopping at the markets great fun and you will learn how to prepare and cook some unusual dishes.

On the majority of our trips in Ethiopia, Sudan, Central Asia, China and South East Asia, in addition to our crew we will have a local guide on board who will travel with us for the entire duration of our time within one country. In these cases, the local guide becomes a third crew member and is able to offer their local knowledge as well as an insight into their country and the lives of the local people.

In most other areas of Africa, the Americas, India and Turkey, in addition to our crew we will employ local guides in specific locations of interest (for just a few hours up to a few days).

Your crew have a duty of care to all members of the group and therefore they have the authority to ask you to leave the trip if you require serious medical assistance, you are behaving in an anti-social manner or refuse to comply with local laws and customs. In all matters relating to the trip, the leader's decision will be final and we appreciate your respect of this.

## **Accommodation on Tour**

Dragoman's overland trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether camping or staying in hotels or hostels, and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Whilst our crew will do their best to accommodate couples travelling together in twin rooms, all our travellers should expect to stay in multi-share accommodation when staying in hostels, gers or yurts.

The type, variety and standard of accommodation will vary greatly depending on what options are available at the time; hotels can vary from very basic rooms without electricity or running water to high standard hotels with good facilities! Generally in hotels most rooms will be single sex, twin-share, but in South America many rooms are triple/quad-share. Hostels, gers and yurts are nearly always multi-share and may be mixed sex.

The campsites will range from rather basic to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars. In some cases it may also be possible to upgrade locally to bungalows, lodges or even tree-houses. One of the highlights of overlanding is that in more remote areas we will camp away



using a basic camping kitchen is to keep it simple! (On trips south of Nairobi we have a cook on board the truck; however you will still be required to help them to prepare meals).

An example of a typical camp breakfast might be toast with spreads, fruit and cereal as well as tea and coffee. When time allows it will also be possible to serve something hot such as eggs or pancakes. Lunch is almost always a sandwich heaped high with healthy salad and assorted fillings, with fruit to follow. Dinner might be a BBQ, risotto or pasta dish and there is always the chance to try some local cooking. Generally our passengers find the more they put into a trip, the more they benefit from it.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Dietary Requirements

If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and tell your crew at your welcome meeting. Our crew will try to cater for any particular dietary requirement or food intolerance whenever possible. However, it must be remembered that it may not always be possible and the variety of dishes may be severely limited in comparison to those available to others. If there is anything in particular you require in your diet, that you would miss from home, or because of an allergy would miss out on, it would be best to bring this with you. Depending on your particular requirements, you may need to allow yourself some extra spending money to allow you to purchase extra food items.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Itineraries

Our itineraries are developed and published with the best of intentions, however travel in more remote areas of the world is unpredictable – borders can close, there can be extreme adverse weather, strikes or maybe mechanical issues that affect the running of your trip, but equally due to the nature of our trips we can often spontaneously include a local festival or event into the itinerary. This being said, the safety of our passengers, leaders and operators is a priority for us. With this in mind we monitor world events very closely. By the very nature of the adventure travel that we take, there are risks and hazards that are inherent in our itineraries. We make operational decisions based on informed advice from a number of sources, including the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice, reports from other travel companies and local suppliers, leaders' reports from off the road and local contacts we have built up over many years of experience.

[Back to top ^](#)

## British Foreign Office Travel Advice and Warnings

Dragoman follows the British Foreign Office Travel advice when deciding where and where we are unable to travel. We will base our decisions on itineraries and alterations to published routes based on their advice rather than the advice of other governments. We will advise you of any significant changes in advice before travel or whilst you are overseas.

However, we recommend you check the latest travel advisories from your own government for the country you are travelling to before you book and prior to departure. If there are any travel warnings present for the region you will travel to, as well as considering whether you are happy to travel despite the warning you must also check to ensure that it is not invalidating your travel insurance. Here are a few useful addresses:

UK - [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

Australia - <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>

New Zealand - <http://www.safetravel.govt.nz/>

United States - <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html>

Canada - [http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries\\_pays/menu-eng.asp](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp)

We also recommend that you check out the UK Travel Aware website before you travel at <https://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk/>. This website offers straightforward travel advice, top tips, and up-

to-date country information to help you plan a safe trip.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Health

You need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in our trips. When selecting your trip please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assessed your ability to cope with our style of travel. To help you assess if this trip is suitable, please refer to the physical rating. The ratings for each trip are a good indication of how challenging they are and in some cases you should be prepared for some long driving days and possibly limited facilities. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns. Please note that if, in the opinion of our leader, you are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to yourself and/or the rest of the group, Dragoman reserves the right to exclude you from all or part of the trip without a refund.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information prior to travel, particularly if you have a pre-existing medical condition. You must also declare any pre-existing medical conditions to your travel insurers upon purchase and provide evidence to us prior to departure that your pre-existing medical condition has been declared to your insurers. Failure to do so will mean that you are unable to join the trip.

## Extreme Environments

There may be periods of time within your trip when you meet extreme conditions, such as extreme heat, extreme wind, extreme cold, extreme humidity, extreme altitude, extreme crowds etc. Whilst our crew will let you know at the time when you are likely to meet these conditions, please ensure that you have read through the trip notes carefully and researched the local weather conditions at the time and that you feel that you are fit enough to cope with these conditions. If you have any doubts at all, please contact us to discuss your concerns prior to booking, and when on trip, if you find that the local conditions are causing you concern at any time, please be sure to let your trip leader know so that appropriate precautions can be discussed.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Altitude

Some pre-existing medical conditions are known to severely worsen at high altitude and be difficult to adequately treat on the ground, leading to more serious consequences. It is imperative that you discuss your pre-existing medical condition/s with your doctor. We understand certain medications are reported to aid acclimatising to high altitude; please discuss these options with your doctor. For trips that travel to areas of high altitude, the tour leader will issue you with a self-assessment altitude questionnaire which allows you to monitor how you are coping with the altitude and informs you of danger signals so that you can report these as soon as possible, either to the tour leader or a medical professional.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Yellow Fever

A valid international certificate of vaccination against Yellow Fever is required in many countries. You may need to present this on arrival at the airport or border crossing. Some countries will refuse entry if you are unable to present your certificate. It's also quite common for your home country to request a Yellow Fever certificate on your arrival back home.

It is your responsibility to check with your doctor well in advance of leaving home about the Yellow Fever requirements for the countries you'll be visiting.

## Malaria & other mosquito-borne diseases

There is a risk of contracting malaria in some areas which we travel through. If your trip goes to a areas with malaria it is always best to get expert advice before travelling about the types of malaria pills available, whether they are recommended, and take any that are prescribed as instructed. Consult your GP or travel clinic for the most up-to-date requirements.

Other mosquito-borne diseases such as yellow fever, dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika are continuing to spread and are becoming a bigger problem around the world. Mosquito bite prevention is vital to avoid contracting any of these diseases, as there are no vaccines or specific treatments

available. Health professionals have issued warnings for pregnant women travelling to areas affected by the Zika virus. For more information about Zika please visit:

- WHO: [www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/zika-virus](http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/zika-virus)
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/zika](http://www.cdc.gov/zika)

The Anopheles mosquitoes that transmit malaria usually bite between the hours of dusk and dawn, whereas the Aedes mosquitoes that transmit yellow fever, dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika bite both during the day and the night. To prevent being bitten, it is recommended to cover up by wearing long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light-coloured and buttoned at the wrists. Do not sleep without closing your windows, tent door, etc. and use a mosquito net in hotels or if sleeping outside where there are mosquitoes present. Use mosquito repellent applied directly to your skin or soaked into your clothing. Treating clothes and mosquito nets with a Permethrin solution also provides significant protection. It should be available at most travel stores. Mosquito coils are useful on still nights and in hotel rooms, but cannot be used inside the tents. For more advice on how to avoid bites please see: [www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/38/insect-and-tick-bite-avoidance](http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/38/insect-and-tick-bite-avoidance)

[Back to top ^](#)

## Vaccinations

Recommended vaccinations and other health protections vary according to different regions and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest specific health advice on the regions and countries you are planning to travel in, so please check with either your doctor or travel clinic in good time before you travel. The following websites are also a helpful resource:

[www.nathnac.net](http://www.nathnac.net) and [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

In the UK, we have been working with Nomad Travel for many years and their website has comprehensive, up-to-date vaccination and health information. You will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at Nomad Travel clinics.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Safety & Security

At Dragoman your safety is of paramount importance and we will do our best to ensure that your travel with us is safe and trouble-free, but we do ask that you take that little bit of extra care whilst you are away and to understand about the nature of this style of travel.

Of course we want you to have an enjoyable time, but you must also remember that part of the enjoyment of travel is experiencing a different way of life and cultures. This may also mean experiencing different safety and hygiene standards than those you are normally used to.

Therefore, please take note of the following safety tips and follow any local safety advice or briefings delivered by our crew or any third-party suppliers we use during your trip.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Transport Safety

- Our own vehicles have fully-fitted seat belts; make sure you always belt up.
- If you find a safety belt inoperable or missing on one of our vehicles, please inform the crew immediately.
- Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that other vehicles we may use or recommend in some countries will be fitted with seat belts on every seat as it is not a legal requirement in much of the world.
- Please remain seated on board vehicles at all times when the vehicle is in motion.
- Never place luggage in the aisles or foot wells.
- Ensure you know where your nearest Emergency exit is; this may be a designated emergency exit, a window, a door, or a roof hatch.
- Check the location of the fire extinguisher and first aid kit.
- Follow any safety instructions provided by the crew/driver.
- Our vehicles are fitted with roof seats which can be used in certain conditions, such as when

driving at low speeds, off main tarmac roads, etc. The roof hatches can only be opened and the roof seats used with the express permission of the crew and you must never sit in the roof seats without seat belts.

## Road Safety

- Traffic in some countries travels on the opposite side of the road to what you may be used to, so ensure you look both ways before crossing the road.
- In many countries vehicles do not automatically stop at crossings and driving styles may be very unpredictable, so please remain very vigilant when near roads and vehicles.
- Crash helmets are often not provided with mopeds and motorbikes overseas – we do not recommend you hire these vehicles.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Fire & Other Safety - Hostels/Hotels/Homestays

- Ensure you know where your nearest fire exit is and check to ensure that it is operative.
- Check the location of the nearest fire extinguisher.
- Study the fire instructions in your room if available.
- Identify how to raise the alarm if a fire occurs.
- If a fire occurs, leave immediately; do not stop to collect your effects.
- Proceed to an assembly point well away from the building.
- Electrics in hotels in many of the places that we visit will not be up to the same standards as at home. Please ensure that you check rooms, especially bathrooms and are aware of any issues that look unsafe. If in doubt inform the crew who will endeavour to sort the situation out if possible.
- Staircases and stairwells are often built to a very different design than under western building standards. There may be no guard rails, be excessively steep, have dangerous gaps between the stairs and the wall, etc. At all times be aware and take appropriate and prudent care.
- We often stay in homestays and farmstays. These may range from a traditional yurt through to a tree house or a town house. As these are traditional homes, they may well not adhere to our western standards of safety and so it is important that you make yourself aware of potential risks.
- If in doubt please inform the crew of any safety issues with the hotels/hostels or homestays.

## Fire Safety - Campsites

- Ensure you know where the nearest source of water or fire extinguisher is.
- Know how to raise the alarm.
- Extinguish all camping fires fully before retiring to bed.
- Observe any regulations regarding fires and bushfires in dry conditions.
- Identify how to raise the alarm if a fire occurs.
- If a fire occurs, leave immediately; do not stop to collect your effects.
- Proceed to an assembly point away from the tented accommodation/affected campsite.

## Other Campsite Safety & Security

- Familiarise yourself with the campsite and any known hazards.
- Group the tents around our vehicle wherever possible.
- No open flames, smoking or flammable liquids in or near the tents.
- Ensure the cooking area is well away from the tents.
- Ensure all water for cooking and drinking is purified first.
- Ensure any soil toilets are a minimum of 50m away from the tents and the cooking area.
- All food waste should be burned or buried a minimum of 100m away from the site.
- Ensure local advice is followed concerning any wildlife in the area.
- Keep valuables locked in the vehicle.
- Be aware of any local security issues that might be important.
- Do not set out tents close to perimeter fences which may be a security risk.
- Be aware of the security arrangements and local guards for campsite and if in doubt ask them

where and where not to pitch tents.

- If in doubt please inform the crew of any safety issues with campsite.
- When wild camping, ensure that you do not wander away from the camp alone. If you do leave camp, ensure that you have notified the leader or other members of the group.

## Food Safety

- Make sure your food has been thoroughly cooked.
- Hot food should be hot, cold food should be cold.
- Avoid any uncooked food, except fruit and vegetables (notably those you can peel or shell yourself).
- In many countries you should only drink bottled water or purified water and ensure any seal is intact when purchasing bottles.
- On the Dragoman vehicles we have a tank of drinking water that is kept purified by the crew.
- Avoid ice in drinks as this can cause upset stomachs in hot climates.
- Make sure you wash your hands in antibacterial product when preparing and/or eating food.
- Many of the restaurants that you will eat in, either as a group or as individuals, will NOT have the same standards of food hygiene as we have in the western world. Unfortunately this is a reality of life in these regions. Therefore please think carefully about where you eat, what food you order and be aware of the risks.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Personal Safety

One of the real advantages of overland travel is that the vehicle provides a very real level of security when travelling. There is no doubt that a properly-equipped overland vehicle, with safes, fully lockable doors and windows is an obvious advantage when travelling in much of the world. Generally speaking, you will not be travelling on local public transport and will have the added security of travelling in a group with experienced crew on-hand to offer advice. We have come up with a few pointers that we recommend you follow:

- Follow the crew's specific safety advice in each destination.
- Always remain aware and vigilant, and stay away from situations where you do not feel comfortable.
- Avoid carrying too much money.
- Always avoid carrying your passport, driving licence, air tickets, and other valuable items around with you unless this is essential. Instead, keep valuables such as this locked away in the truck's safe, or the safety deposit box in the room or reception of the hotel/hostel.
- If you are carrying cash, cards or valuables, use a money belt or neck wallet which are more easily concealed and more difficult to pickpocket.
- Do not take any valuable jewellery, watches, etc. away with you in the first place.
- Avoid walking in poorly lit areas.
- If possible avoid walking around on your own; it is always safer to explore with others.
- Always try to walk with confidence and purpose, which will help you avoid looking like a lost tourist!
- Take special care when walking to avoid spraining or twisting your ankle on potholes, cobbles and uneven ground.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Activity Safety & Optional Activities

You will have the opportunity to take part in many exciting activities and excursions, some of which are included (e.g. hiking the Inca Trail, trekking to see Mountain Gorillas, visiting the Taj Mahal, etc.), whilst others are optional (e.g. white water rafting in Uganda, zip-lining in Costa Rica, etc.). Some of these activities require a certain level of fitness, so it's important that you read through the trip notes thoroughly and make your own conclusions as to whether you feel that you are fit and healthy enough to enjoy this trip and its activities to their fullest.

Some activities may have higher risks than you are used to and you must judge whether or not you wish, or have the physical ability, to take part.

Please note that riding helmets are mandatory for all optional and included horse riding activities. This is an insurance requirement.

Optional activities mentioned by Dragoman are not included in the trip price or kitty, and do not form part of your contract with Dragoman. As such you accept that any assistance given by Dragoman crew members or local representatives in arranging optional activities does not render us liable for them in any way. The Dragoman crew are assisting you in arranging these activities for your added enjoyment whilst on your trip. The operators of these services and optional extras are local suppliers who contract directly with the client 'on the road', subject to and in accordance with their own terms and conditions. Dragoman accepts no liability for any action or activity undertaken by the client which is arranged independently of Dragoman while on tour. Crew may take part in an optional activity but do so as private individuals and not as company representatives.

Please use your own good judgement when selecting an activity in your free time.

Ensure that you use the appropriate equipment on optional activities, including life jackets, helmets, etc. This is especially important on activities such as horse riding, white-water rafting, etc.

Always ensure that your travel medical insurance covers you for all included and optional activities that you wish to participate in.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Included Activities

Included activities are listed in the day-to-day itinerary, all other activities are optional and at your own expense. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not necessarily be refunded; this is something you will need to check with your leader.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Optional Activities

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Please note that certain activities may not be available on your particular visit if they are overbooked, underbooked, out of season, or for any other reason - the list of activities is made according to our latest information and in the best faith, but please be aware that things may change between our last visit and your arrival. Please also note that it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination, and it is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there.

Prices listed are for entrance only and do not include transport costs to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated - again, these prices are displayed according to our latest information and in the best faith, but prices do fluctuate due to exchange rates, season, numbers of participants, and simple increases from the operator - any prices listed are a guide only and certainly cannot be guaranteed.

Optional activities are not necessarily endorsed or recommended by Dragoman nor included in the price of this trip. If you do any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have comprehensive travel insurance. Without evidence of valid travel insurance you will not be allowed to start the trip.

We recommend that any policy has a minimum medical (including repatriation) cover of £5,000,000. We



recommend that any policy also has a minimum level of cover for Personal Liability of £2,000,000 and for Cancellation and Curtailment of £5,000 (or the full cost of your trip). Cover for loss of baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice although please bear in mind that personal effects are more likely to go missing whilst travelling and you should ensure that your policy is adequate to cover the value of your personal effects e.g. cameras, tablets, phones, ipods, etc. Please note that Dragoman is not responsible for your personal effects and is not insured for their loss. Please note that you should be insured for trip postponement or cancellation purposes immediately upon paying a deposit.

Whatever policy you choose, you must ensure that it is designed for adventure/overland travel and make sure it covers any activity that you intend to undertake (whether included or optional). As such it must cover you for adventure activities such as white water rafting, trekking, horse-riding, etc., and that the 24-hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries - for example, that they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or if you were trekking in the Andes. On activities or side trips that are not recommended by us, please ensure you are happy with the safety of the activity before participating.

Please note that in the case of credit card travel insurance we will require details of the participating insurer, the insurance policy number and emergency contact number prior to travel rather than just the bank's name and credit card details. It is up to you to ensure that these policies have the cover you require, as many of these policies are not able to cope with adventure travel to remote areas and many are not valid for travelling outside your country of residence or outside the EU.

[Back to top ^](#)

## **Our Liability Insurance**

Dragoman has comprehensive passenger vehicle liability protection and tour operator insurance. These policies have total indemnities of £5,000,000 and £10,000,000 per incident respectively. This is in addition to local vehicle insurance and your personal travel insurance.

[Back to top ^](#)

## **Out of Office Hours Contact**

We have an out of office hours number you can call which should only be used once you have left your home country to start the trip and in the event of a real emergency. Should you need to call the number, we will do what we can to help but please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours. If you can not get through please leave a message with you name, reference number, contact details and a message with the help that you need and we will get back to you.

If your flight is delayed or cancelled, please let us know and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in these trip notes. If you cannot get through leave a message and a contact number as these will be regularly checked and the crew informed if necessary.

**Out of hours Number: +44 (0) 7985 106564**

[Back to top ^](#)

## **Luggage & Kit List**

Although you will not have to carry your main bag for long distances, you will need to help load and unload them onto the truck. For this reason we recommend that you use a backpack or soft bag rather than a heavy suitcase. During your trip your main luggage will be kept in the truck's back locker which will be inaccessible during a drive day, so you will also need a small daypack. This can be used to carry your camera, water bottle and other personal effects for daily use. Please be aware that due to the constant dust and vibrations your luggage bag will be subject to extreme wear and tear.

The size of baggage that can be brought on this tour is limited by the locker space on the truck. We recommend that your bag be no larger than a large rucksack with a capacity of about 80 litres (approximately 70cm high, 40cm wide, and 40cm deep). The weight limit for luggage on all trucks is a maximum of 20kg.

Your clothes and equipment should be appropriate for the conditions you are travelling in, which will vary

depending on which part of the world you're heading to. On overland trips, Dragoman will provide all camping equipment apart from sleeping bags and ground mats, so you'll need to bring those with you if your trip includes camping nights.

Think about the climate and altitude of the areas you'll be travelling to - there's nothing worse than being cold at night so it's worth investing in a decent sleeping bag if it's likely to get cold. And remember that even when it's warm during the day, it can often get cold at night, particularly in desert regions.

For a general idea of what you need, this list provides a guide:

### **General**

- Sleeping bag, sleeping bag liner, sleeping mat and small pillow – if your trip includes camping nights
- Sandals or flip flops
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Sun hat and sunglasses
- Waterproof jacket
- Warm sweater or fleece
- Swimwear
- Comfortable travelling clothes and a set of casual but smart clothes for evenings out
- If visiting places of worship on the trip, men should bring a pair of full length trousers and women should bring a skirt that covers their knees and a scarf
- Towel – quick dry, lightweight travel towels are best
- Toiletries including bio degradable wet wipes, sanitary products, hand gel, sun cream and insect repellent
- Day pack – essential for keeping things handy when on the truck, on short hikes, walking around cities, etc
- Assorted dry bags – to protect your kit from dust and damp
- Pouch or money belt
- Water bottle (at least 1 litre) – we carry drinking water on all of our trucks and actively encourage our customers to use the water supplied. Whilst away from the truck we encourage the use of a filter water bottle and we are able to offer Dragoman customers a 25% discount on Water to Go bottles and filters using the code DRAGOMAN25 on the link <https://www.watertogo.eu/dragoman>
- Head torch with spare batteries and bulbs
- Camera with spare battery and extra memory cards
- Electrical accessories such as charger, power bank, adapter, etc
- Carbon monoxide detector
- A good book, a diary or notebook and pen, a fun game for travel days
- Personal medical kit – see notes below

### **Cold weather**

For trips going through mountainous areas, deserts, high altitude regions and Patagonia, you should be prepared for cold weather, especially at night. Ensure you bring:

- 3/4 or 4/5 season sleeping bag with liner – see note on sleeping bag ratings below
- Thermal base layers
- Winter jacket
- Hat, gloves and scarf
- Warm socks

### **Hot weather**

For trips going through tropical areas you should be prepared for hot and humid weather. Ensure you bring:

- Loose fitting clothes with long sleeves and legs
- Mosquito repellent

- Mosquito net – not essential as our tents have mosquito netting but can be handy for hotels and hostels or sleeping under the stars

## **Trips with trekking**

For trips including treks, ensure you bring:

- Lightweight walking clothes suitable for the general climate
- Waterproof trousers
- Sturdy walking boots
- Walking stick(s) – not essential but can help in steep terrain; sticks can generally be hired or purchased en route

[Back to top ^](#)

## **Sleeping Bags**

A sleeping bag's rating typically indicates the lowest temperature at which it will keep the average sleeper warm enough to sustain them but not necessarily make them warm enough to feel comfortable. For example, with a 0°C bag, you should be able to stay in 0°C temperature but you will not necessarily be able to sleep comfortably.

For European sleeping bags there are the following standards:

- The upper limit is the highest temperature at which a 'standard' adult man is able to have a comfortable night's sleep without excess sweating.
- The comfort rating is based on a 'standard' adult woman having a comfortable night's sleep.
- The lower limit is based on the lowest temperature at which a 'standard' adult man is deemed to be able to have a comfortable night's sleep.
- The extreme rating is a survival-only rating for a 'standard' adult man. This is an extreme survival rating only and it is not advisable to rely on this rating for general use.

The transition zone, in between the comfort and lower temperature, is usually considered as the best purchase guideline.

## **Personal Medical Kit**

All of our trucks have a standard motorist's first aid kit on board for use in emergency situations only. The first aid kit is in compliance with UK standards for first aid provision within motor vehicles, and contain supplies to treat road side injuries. We do not carry prescription medications, therefore in addition to this we recommend that you purchase your own personal medical kit.

In the UK we have teamed up with Nomad Travel Stores and Clinics to produce travel medical kits. They have been designed in conjunction with the truck kits and contain everything you would need for any minor incidents and health issues. For more details please visit their website:

**Global Survival Kit** - <http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/p/2712/Global-Survival-Kit>

**Ultimate Medical Kit (POM)** - [http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/p/2909/Ultimate-Medical-Kit-\(POM\)](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/p/2909/Ultimate-Medical-Kit-(POM))

[Back to top ^](#)

## **Passports**

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of your trip - this is important as some countries WILL refuse entry to anyone whose passport is due to expire. A temporary or 'visitor's' passport is not valid on our trips. You will need to provide us with your passport details prior to departing for your trip. If you change your passport, please remember to inform us as soon as possible - however, please be aware that changing your passport can cause big problems if you need to apply for visas or permits (such as the Inca Trail or Gorilla Trekking) in advance.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Pre and Post Trip Accommodation and Airport Transfers

At Dragoman we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of the joining or finishing point cities, why not book additional accommodation to extend your stay? Dragoman can take away the hassle of time zones and language barriers by making the booking for you. This accommodation is only available at the joining or finishing city of your trip, immediately before or after the trip you are travelling on.

While Dragoman is happy to assist with booking your pre and post trip accommodation, it is important that you understand that you may be able to book your own room at a cheaper rate directly through the hotel or on the internet. Our additional accommodation prices are based on the hotel's rate plus an administration fee. Please note our rates do not reflect last minute walk-in rates or internet specials.

We can also book arrival airport transfers for you as long as we have your flight arrival details. These are normally payable in cash upon arrival; however we do have pre-paid transfers in a few destinations.

Please contact our reservations team for details of the accommodation and transfers that we can offer, as not all hotels offer this service.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Continuing Your Trip

Having an amazing trip and met a great group of people? Having too much fun to go home yet? If you're on one of our trips and decide that you would like to continue with us, then why not speak to your trip leader who can advise you of the cost and availability of continuing your journey.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Contingency Emergency Fund

Sometimes, civil or political unrest, or reasons beyond Dragoman's control (e.g. a natural disaster), can mean that an itinerary is disrupted and we have to make a contingency plan. This may involve hiring alternate transport or even the whole group flying over an area. Although Dragoman will help organise travel arrangements, in circumstances outside Dragoman's control you will be required to contribute the additional costs involved and therefore we ask you to bring along a 'Contingency Fund' of USD400. In almost all cases trips run smoothly and this fund is therefore never used. We also recommend that you take along an internationally recognised credit or charge card with a decent limit in case of emergencies, such as medical treatment en route, or even the need to be repatriated; though these occurrences are rare. Remember that travel insurance policies usually only refund you for expenses after you have already paid out.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Responsible Tourism

Dragoman is committed to ensuring that we have a positive impact on local communities and that we implement policies to minimise any negative impact on the local environment. We are dedicated to making sure that we adopt a responsible attitude to the areas through which we travel and believe that our trips should benefit the local people and their environment. Dragoman recognises that we are guests of local communities and strive to make these communities our partners, so that they benefit directly from our visit. You can find full details of Dragoman's Responsible Tourism policy from the link below:

<https://www.dragoman.com/about-us/responsible-travel/policy-and-guidelines>

[Back to top ^](#)

## Water

The sale of bottled water contributes to an enormous environmental problem around the world. In addition to the water in the bottle, the production of a 1 litre plastic bottle takes 2 litres of water and 200ml of oil. A large proportion end up in limited landfill or discarded in waterways and natural environments.

Please avoid the purchase of bottled water by using the chemically sterilised water stored in the purpose-built storage tank on your overland vehicle. You are free to refill your bottle as many times a day as you like. You are helping the environment and your pocket!

[Back to top ^](#)

## Electrical Equipment

Your vehicle will be usually equipped with a 12-Volt socket, so to charge your iPod, MP3 player, camera, laptop and mobile phone you will need a DC 12V adapter - the type that can be used from a cigarette lighter in your car. Please be aware that only one piece of equipment can be charged at a time and it will not be allowed if there is a risk of running the vehicle's batteries low. Batteries may also be recharged from hotel room wall sockets and the majority of the campsites we stay at have electricity points, so please bring along your normal charging adapters as well. You will need to ensure that you have the correct country adapter for your specific charger.

For mobile phones, please note that most countries in the Americas operate at 850 MHz and 1900 MHz which is not the same frequencies used in Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. Most modern tri-band and quad-band mobile phones will be able to operate on these frequencies but please check your mobile phone specifications before travelling to ensure that you'll be able to use your phone in the Americas.

[Back to top ^](#)

## A Few Rules

It is one of our core values to treat all people we encounter with respect, including the local people who make our destinations so special. We have therefore set down a number of rules to which our customers must adhere.

Engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities, committing acts of violence or threatening violence towards local people, other group members or any member of our staff is not allowed. Any customer engaging in such activities will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

You must at all times comply with the laws, customs, foreign exchange and drug regulations of all countries visited and conduct yourself in accordance with our responsible travel policy. Any customer found contravening such laws or regulations will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

Although we are aware that in some parts of the world taking, carrying or selling drugs, carrying weapons, or engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities may be legal, it is not acceptable for Dragoman customers and our tour leaders have the right to ask you to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price if you are found to be engaging in such activities.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Issues on the Trip

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on

[customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk](mailto:customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk).

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Tipping

Tipping is entirely voluntary. The Dragoman crew may be travelling with you for many weeks and usually they become good friends with most members of the group. It is sometimes easy to forget that they do work hard to ensure that you do have a great trip. If you feel you would like to tip them, they certainly would appreciate it.

On a number of our trips, we also use a local guide as well as our own Dragoman crew. These guides live and travel with you through their home country and it is usual to tip them when they leave. We recommend USD 1 to USD 4 per person per day, but check with your crew for an appropriate amount.

[Back to top ^](#)

## Feedback

After your travels, we want to hear from you! We rely on your feedback. We read it carefully. Feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better, and it allows us to make improvements for future travellers.

## COUNTRY SPECIFIC NOTES

### MONGOLIA NOTE

Please note that Mongolia has incredibly poor infrastructure, and is one of the most challenging regions that we drive through in the world. Roads are non-existent in much of the country and we will wild camp for several nights in a row in very remote areas. It can also be cold, especially towards the start or end of the season, and there is always the possibility of rain throughout the high season. It will be a miracle if the truck does not get bogged at some point on a trip in Mongolia, and the itinerary may have to vary somewhat due to weather and road conditions so flexibility is of utmost importance.

In general, the summer months (July and August) can be warm during the day but temperatures can still drop to 0°C at night. For this reason we recommend taking warm clothes and a warm sleeping bag for ALL trips in Mongolia. For trips that run during the colder months (June and September to October) we recommend you bring extra warm clothing and an all-season sleeping bag as it is not uncommon for temperatures to fall to -10C, sometimes colder.

We recommend you check local average weather conditions for each country you will be travelling to in order to properly prepare for your trip.

[Back to top ^](#)

These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey, once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, information and kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these Trip Notes

These trip notes were printed on 24/08/2019